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THE STATE AND REVOLUTION

V. I. LENIN

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THE PUBLISHERS

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE QUESTION of the state is now acquiring particular importance both in the realm of theory and in the realm of practical politics. The imperialist war has greatly accelerated and intensified the process of transformation of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism. The monstrous oppression of the masses of the toilers by the state—which is merging more and more with the all-powerful capitalist combines—is becoming ever more monstrous. The advanced countries are being converted—we speak here of their “rear”—into military convict prisons for the workers.

The unprecedented horrors and miseries of the protracted war are making the position of the masses unbearable and are causing their anger to grow. An international proletarian revolution is clearly maturing. The question of its relation to the state is acquiring practical importance.

The elements of opportunism that accumulated during the decades of comparatively peaceful development gave rise to the trend of social-chauvinism which predominated in the official Socialist Parties throughout the world. This trend of Socialism in words and chauvinism in deeds (Plekhanov, Potresov, Breshkovskaya, Rubanovich, and in a slightly concealed form, Messrs. Tsereteli, Chernov and Co., in Russia; Scheidemann, Legien, David and others in Germany; Renaudel, Guesde, Vandervelde in France and Belgium; Hyndman and the Fabians in England, etc., etc.) is distin-

guished by the base, servile adaptation of the "leaders" of "Socialism" to the interests not only of "their" national bourgeoisie, but also, and particularly, of "their" state—for the majority of the so-called Great Powers have long been exploiting and enslaving a number of small and weak nationalities. The imperialist war is precisely a war for the division and re-division of this kind of booty. The struggle for the emancipation of the masses of the toilers from the influence of the bourgeoisie in general, and of the imperialist bourgeoisie in particular, is impossible without a struggle against opportunist prejudices about the "state."

First of all we examine Marx's and Engels' doctrine of the state and deal in particular detail with those aspects of their doctrine which have been forgotten or have been opportunistically distorted. Then we analyse separately the chief representative of these distortions, Karl Kautsky, the best-known leader of the Second International (1889-1914), which has suffered such miserable bankruptcy in the present war. Finally we sum up, in the main, the experiences of the Russian Revolution of 1905 and particularly of that of 1917. Apparently, the latter is now (beginning of August 1917) completing the first stage of its development; but, generally speaking, this revolution as a whole can only be regarded as a link in a chain of Socialist proletarian revolutions called forth by the imperialist war. Hence, the question of the relation of the Socialist proletarian revolution to the state acquires, not only practical political importance, but the importance of an urgent problem of the day, the problem of explaining to the masses what they will have to do to emancipate themselves from the yoke of capitalism in the very near future.

August 1917

THE AUTHOR

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The present, second edition is published almost without change, except that section 3 has been added to Chapter II.

THE AUTHOR

Moscow

December 17, 1918

CHAPTER I

CLASS SOCIETY AND THE STATE

1. THE STATE AS THE PRODUCT OF THE IRRECONCILABILITY OF CLASS ANTAGONISMS

WHAT IS now happening to Marx's doctrine has, in the course of history, often happened to the doctrines of other revolutionary thinkers and leaders of oppressed classes struggling for emancipation. During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes hound them constantly, attack their doctrines with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaign of lies and slander. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonise them, so to say, and to surround their *names* with a certain halo for the "consolation" of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping them. while at the same time emasculating the revolutionary doctrine of its *content*, vulgarizing it and blunting its revolutionary edge. At the present time, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists in the labour movement concur in this revision of Marxism. They omit, obliterate and distort the revolutionary side of its doctrine, its revolutionary soul. They push to the foreground and extol what is or seems acceptable to the bourgeoisie. All the social-chauvinists are now "Marxists" (don't laugh!). And more and more frequently, German bourgeois scholars, erstwhile specialists in the extermination of Marxism, are speaking of the "national-German" Marx, who,

they aver, trained the labour unions which are so splendidly organized for the purpose of conducting a predatory war!

In such circumstances, in view of the incredibly widespread nature of the distortions of Marxism, our first task is to *restore* the true doctrine of Marx on the state. For this purpose it will be necessary to quote at length from the works of Marx and Engels. Of course, long quotations will make the text cumbersome and will not help to make it popular reading, but we cannot possibly avoid them. All, or at any rate, all the most essential passages in the works of Marx and Engels on the subject of the state must necessarily be given as fully as possible, in order that the reader may form an independent opinion on the totality of views of the founders of scientific Socialism and on the development of those views, and in order that their distortion by the now prevailing "Kautskyism" may be documentarily proved and clearly demonstrated.

Let us begin with the most popular of Engels' works, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, the sixth edition of which was published in Stuttgart as far back as 1894. We must translate the quotations from the German originals, as the Russian translations, although very numerous, are for the most part either incomplete or very unsatisfactory.

Summing up his historical analysis, Engels says:

"The state is therefore by no means a power imposed on society from the outside; just as little is it 'the reality of the moral idea,' 'the image and reality of reason,' as Hegel asserts. Rather, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it is cleft into irreconcilable antagonisms, which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, classes with conflicting economic interests, might not consume themselves and society in

sterile struggle, a power apparently standing above society became necessary for the purpose of moderating the conflict and keeping it within the bounds of 'order'; and this power, arising out of society, but placing itself above it, and increasingly alienating itself from it, is the state" (pp. 177-178 of the sixth German edition).

This fully expresses the basic idea of Marxism on the question of the historical role and meaning of the state. The state is the product and the manifestation of the *irreconcilability* of class antagonisms. The state arises when, where and to the extent that class antagonisms *cannot* be objectively reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable.

It is precisely on this most important and fundamental point that distortions of Marxism, proceeding along two main lines, begin.

On the one hand, the bourgeois ideologists, and particularly the petty-bourgeois ideologists, compelled by the pressure of indisputable historical facts to admit that the state only exists where there are class antagonisms and the class struggle, "correct" Marx in a way that makes it appear that the state is an organ for the *conciliation* of classes. According to Marx, the state could neither arise nor continue to exist if it were possible to conciliate classes. According to the petty-bourgeois and philistine professors and publicists—frequently on the strength of well-meaning references to Marx!—the state conciliates classes. According to Marx, the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it creates "order," which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the collisions between the classes. In the opinion of the petty-bourgeois politicians, order means the conciliation of classes, and not the oppression of one class by another; to moderate collisions means conciliating and not depriving the

oppressed classes of definite means and methods of fighting to overthrow the oppressors.

For instance, when, in the Revolution of 1917, the question of the real meaning and role of the state arose in all its magnitude as a practical question demanding immediate action on a wide mass scale, all the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks immediately and completely sank to the petty-bourgeois theory that the "state" "conciliates" classes. Innumerable resolutions and articles by politicians of both these parties are thoroughly saturated with this purely petty-bourgeois and philistine "conciliation" theory. The fact that the state is the organ of the rule of a definite class which *cannot* be reconciled with its antipode (the class opposite to it), this the petty-bourgeois democrats will never be able to understand. Their attitude towards the state is one of the most striking proofs that our Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks are not Socialists at all (which we Bolsheviks have always maintained), but petty-bourgeois democrats with near-Socialist phraseology.

On the other hand, the "Kautskyite" distortion of Marxism is far more subtle. "Theoretically," it is not denied that the state is the organ of class rule, or that class antagonisms are irreconcilable. But what is lost sight of or glossed over is this: if the state is the product of irreconcilable class antagonisms, if it is a power standing *above* society and "*increasingly alienating* itself from it," it is clear that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, *but also without the destruction* of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this "alienation." As we shall see later, Marx very definitely drew this theoretically self-evident conclusion from a concrete historical analysis of the tasks of the revolution. And—as we shall show fully in our subsequent remarks—it is precisely this conclusion which Kautsky . . . has "forgotten" and distorted.

2. SPECIAL BODIES OF ARMED MEN, PRISONS, ETC.

Engels continues:

"As against the ancient gentile organization, the primary distinguishing feature of the state is the division of the subjects of the state *according to territory*."

Such a division seems "natural" to us, but it cost a prolonged struggle against the old form of tribal or gentile society.

"... The second is the establishment of a *public power*, which is no longer directly identical with the population organizing itself as an armed power. This special public power is necessary, because a self-acting armed organization of the population has become impossible since the cleavage into classes. . . . This public power exists in every state; it consists not merely of armed men, but of material appendages, prisons and coercive institutions of all kinds, of which gentile society knew nothing. . . ."

Engels further elucidates the concept of the "power" which is termed the state—a power which arises from society, but which places itself above it and becomes more and more alienated from it. What does this power mainly consist of? It consists of special bodies of armed men which have prisons, etc., at their disposal.

We are justified in speaking of special bodies of armed men, because the public power which is an attribute of every state is not "directly identical" with the armed population, with its "self-acting armed organization."

Like all the great revolutionary thinkers, Engels tries to draw the attention of the class-conscious workers to the very fact which prevailing philistinism regards as least worthy of attention, as the most common and sanctified, not only by long standing, but one

might say by petrified prejudices. A standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power. But can it be otherwise?

From the point of view of the vast majority of Europeans of the end of the nineteenth century whom Engels was addressing, and who have not lived through or closely observed a single great revolution, it cannot be otherwise. They completely fail to understand what a "self-acting armed organization of the population" is. To the question, whence arose the need for special bodies of armed men, standing above society and becoming alienated from it (police and standing army), the West European and Russian philistines are inclined to answer with a few phrases borrowed from Spencer* or Mikhailovsky,** by referring to the complexity of social life, the differentiation of functions, and so forth.

Such a reference seems "scientific"; it effectively dulls the senses of the man in the street and obscures the most important and basic fact, namely, the cleavage of society into irreconcilably antagonistic classes.

Had this cleavage not existed, the "self-acting armed organization of the population" might have differed from the primitive organization of a tribe of monkeys grasping sticks, or of primitive man, or of men united in a tribal form of society, by its complexity, its high technique, and so forth; but it would still have been possible.

It is impossible now, because civilized society is divided into antagonistic and, indeed, irreconcilably antagonistic classes, the "self-acting" arming of which would lead to an armed struggle

* *Herbert Spencer* (1820-1903)—English bourgeois sociologist. According to the Spencerian theory the state originated not as a result of the appearance of classes and the class struggle, but in consequence of "the complexity of social life."—*Ed.*

** *N. K. Mikhailovsky* (1842-1904)—ideologist of Narodism (Populism), a trend in the Russian social and political movement hostile to Marxism. Exponent of the so-called "subjective method in sociology."—*Ed.*

between them. A state arises, a special force is created in the form of special bodies of armed men, and every revolution, by destroying the state apparatus, demonstrates to us how the ruling class strives to restore the special bodies of armed men which serve *it*, and how the oppressed class strives to create a new organization of this kind, capable of serving not the exploiters but the exploited.

In the above argument, Engels raises theoretically the very question which every great revolution raises practically, palpably and on a mass scale of action, namely, the question of the relation between "special" bodies of armed men and the "self-acting armed organization of the population." We shall see how this is concretely illustrated by the experience of the European and Russian revolutions.

But let us return to Engels' exposition.

He points out that sometimes, in certain parts of North America, for example, this public power is weak (he has in mind a rare exception in capitalist society, and parts of North America in its pre-imperialist days where the free colonist predominated), but that in general it grows stronger:

... "It [the public power] grows stronger, however, in proportion as the class antagonisms within the state become more acute, and with the growth in size and population of the adjacent states. We have only to look at our present-day Europe, where class struggle and rivalry in conquest have screwed up the public power to such a pitch that it threatens to devour the whole of society and even the state itself. . . ."

This was written no later than the beginning of the nineties of the last century, Engels' last preface being dated June 16, 1891. The turn towards imperialism—meaning by that the complete domination of the trusts, the omnipotence of the big banks, a colonial

policy on a grand scale, and so forth—was only just beginning in France, and was even weaker in North America and in Germany. Since then “rivalry in conquest” has made gigantic strides—especially as, by the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century, the whole world had been finally divided up among these “rivals in conquest,” *i.e.*, among the great predatory powers. Since then, military and naval armaments have grown to monstrous proportions, and the predatory war of 1914-17 for the domination of the world by England or Germany, for the division of the spoils, has brought the “devouring” of all the forces of society by the rapacious state power to the verge of complete catastrophe.

As early as 1891 Engels was able to point to “rivalry in conquest” as one of the most important distinguishing features of the foreign policy of the Great Powers, but in 1914-17, when this rivalry, many times intensified, has given rise to an imperialist war, the social-chauvinist scoundrels cover up the defence of the predatory interests of “their own” bourgeoisie with phrases like “defence of the fatherland,” “defence of the republic and the revolution,” etc.!

3. THE STATE AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR THE EXPLOITATION OF THE OPPRESSED CLASS

For the maintenance of a special public power standing above society, taxes and state loans are needed.

“... Possessing the public power and the right to exact taxes, the officials”—Engels writes—“now exist as organs of society standing *above* society. The free, voluntary respect which was accorded to the organs of the gentile organization does not satisfy them, even if they could have it. . . .”

* Special laws are enacted proclaiming the sanctity and immunity of the officials. “The shabbiest police servant . . . has more

'authority' than all the representatives of the tribe put together, but even the head of the military power of a civilized state may well envy a tribal chief the "unfeigned and undisputed respect the latter enjoys."

Here the question of the privileged position of the officials as organs of state power is stated. The main point indicated is: what puts them *above* society? We shall see how this theoretical problem was solved in practice by the Paris Commune in 1871 and how it was slurred over in a reactionary manner by Kautsky in 1912.

"... As the state arose out of the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but as it, at the same time, arose in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which through the medium of the state became also the dominant class politically, and thus acquired new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class..."

It was not only the ancient and feudal states that were organs for the exploitation of the slaves and serfs but

"... the contemporary representative state is an instrument of exploitation of wage labour by capital. By way of exception, however, periods occur when the warring classes are so nearly balanced that the state power, ostensibly appearing as a mediator, acquires, for the moment, a certain independence in relation to both..."

Such, for instance, were the absolute monarchies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Bonapartism of the First and Second Empires in France, and the Bismarck regime in Germany.

Such, we add, is the present Kerensky government in republican Russia since it began to persecute the revolutionary proletariat, at a moment when, thanks to the leadership of the petty-bourgeois

democrats, the Soviets have *already* become impotent while the bourgeoisie is *not yet* strong enough openly to disperse them.

"In a democratic republic," Engels continues, "wealth wields its power indirectly, but all the more effectively," first, by means of the "direct corruption of the officials" (America); second by means of "the alliance between the government and the Stock Exchange" (France and America).

At the present time, imperialism and the domination of the banks have "developed" both these methods of defending and asserting the omnipotence of wealth in democratic republics of all descriptions to an unusually fine art. For instance, in the very first months of the Russian democratic republic, one might say during the honeymoon of the union of the "Socialist" S.-R.'s [Socialist-Revolutionaries] and the Mensheviks with the bourgeoisie, Mr. Palchinsky, in the coalition government,* obstructed every measure intended to restrain the capitalists and their marauding practices, their plundering of the public treasury on war contracts. When later on Mr. Palchinsky resigned (and, of course, was replaced by just such another Palchinsky), the capitalists "rewarded" him with a "soft" job and a salary of 120,000 rubles per annum. What would you call this—direct or indirect corruption? An alliance between the government and the syndicates, or "only" friendly relations? What role do the Chernovs, Tseretelis, Avksentyevs and Skobelevs play? Are they the "direct" or only the indirect allies of the millionaire treasury looters?

The omnipotence of "wealth" is thus more *secure* in a democratic republic, since it does not depend on the faulty political shell of capitalism. A democratic republic is the best possible political

* *The Coalition Government*—the government formed on May 5, 1917, i.e., two months after the overthrow of tsarism in February 1917. In addition to capitalist ministers, the Mensheviks Skobelev and Tsereteli, and the Socialist-Revolutionaries Chernov and Kerensky, and others, were members of it.—Ed.

shell for capitalism, and, therefore, once capital has gained control of this very best shell (through the Palchinskys, Chernovs, Tsere-tclis and Co.), it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that *no* change, either of persons, of institutions, or of parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic, can shake it.

We must also note that Engels very definitely calls universal suffrage an instrument of bourgeois rule. Universal suffrage, he says, obviously summing up the long experience of German Social-Democracy, is

“...an index of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the modern state.”

The petty-bourgeois democrats, such as our Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, and also their twin brothers, the social-chauvinists and opportunists of Western Europe, all expect “more” from universal suffrage. They themselves share and instil into the minds of the people the wrong idea that universal suffrage “in the *modern* state” is really capable of expressing the will of the majority of the toilers and of ensuring its realization.

Here we can only note this wrong idea, only point out that Engels’ perfectly clear, precise and concrete statement is distorted at every step in the propaganda and agitation conducted by the “official” (i.e., opportunist) Socialist parties. A detailed elucidation of the utter falsity of this idea, which Engels brushes aside, is given in our further account of the views of Marx and Engels on the “*modern*” state.

Engels gives a general summary of his views in the most popular of his works in the following words:

“The state, therefore, has not existed from all eternity. There have been societies which managed without it, which had no conception of the state and state power. At a certain stage of economic development, which was necessarily bound up with

the cleavage of society into classes, the state became a necessity owing to this cleavage. We are now rapidly approaching a stage in the development of production at which the existence of these classes has not only ceased to be a necessity, but is becoming a positive hindrance to production. They will fall as inevitably as they arose at an earlier stage. Along with them, the state will inevitably fall. The society that organizes production anew on the basis of the free and equal association of the producers will put the whole state machine where it will then belong: in the museum of antiquities, side by side with the spinning wheel and the bronze axe."

We do not often come across this passage in the propaganda and agitation literature of present-day Social-Democracy. But even when we do come across it, it is generally quoted in the same manner as one bows before an icon, *i.e.*, it is done merely to show official respect for Engels, and no attempt is made to gauge the breadth and depth of the revolution that this relegating of "the whole state machine . . . to the museum of antiquities" presupposes. In most cases we do not even find an understanding of what Engels calls the state machine.

4. THE "WITHERING AWAY" OF THE STATE AND VIOLENT REVOLUTION

Engels' words regarding the "withering away" of the state are so widely known, they are so often quoted, and they reveal the significance of the customary painting of Marxism to look like opportunism so clearly that we must deal with them in detail. We shall quote the whole passage from which they are taken.

1. *"The proletariat seizes the state power and transforms the means of production in the first instance into state property.*

But in doing this, it puts an end to itself as the proletariat, it puts an end to all class differences and class antagonisms, it puts an end also to the state as the state. Former society, moving in class antagonisms, had need of the state, that is, an organization of the exploiting class at each period for the maintenance of its external conditions of production; that is, therefore, for the forcible holding down of the exploited class in the conditions of oppression (slavery, villeinage or serfdom, wage labour) determined by the existing mode of production. The state was the official representative of society as a whole, its embodiment in a visible corporation; but it was this only in so far as it was the state of that class which itself, in its epoch, represented society as a whole; in ancient times, the state of the slave-owning citizens; in the Middle Ages, of the feudal nobility; in our epoch, of the bourgeoisie. When ultimately it becomes really representative of society as a whole, it makes itself superfluous. As soon as there is no longer any class of society to be held in subjection; as soon as, along with class domination and the struggle for individual existence based on the former anarchy of production, the collisions and excesses arising from these have also been abolished, there is nothing more to be repressed, which would make a special repressive force, a state, necessary. The first act in which the state really comes forward as the representative of society as a whole—the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society—is at the same time its last independent act as a state. The interference of the state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then ceases of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the process of production. The state is not ‘abolished,’ *it withers away*. It is from this standpoint that we must appraise the phrase ‘free people’s

state'—both its justification at times for agitational purposes, and its ultimate scientific inadequacy—and also the demand of the so-called anarchists that the state should be abolished overnight" (*Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science* [*Anti-Dühring*], pp. 314-15 of the English edition).

It may be said without fear of error that of this argument of Engels' which is so singularly rich in ideas, only one point has become an integral part of Socialist thought among modern Socialist parties, namely, that according to Marx the state "withers away"—as distinct from the anarchist doctrine of the "abolition" of the state. To emasculate Marxism in such a manner is to reduce it to opportunism, for such an "interpretation" only leaves the hazy conception of a slow, even, gradual change, of absence of leaps and storms, of absence of revolution. The current, widespread, mass, if one may say so, conception of the "withering away" of the state undoubtedly means the slurring over, if not the repudiation, of revolution.

Such an "interpretation" is the crudest distortion of Marxism, advantageous only to the bourgeoisie; in point of theory, it is based on a disregard for the most important circumstances and considerations pointed out, say, in the "summary" of Engels' argument we have just quoted in full.

In the first place, Engels at the very outset of his argument says that, in assuming state power, the proletariat by that "puts an end to the state as the state." It is not "good form" to ponder over what this means. Generally, it is either ignored altogether, or it is considered to be a piece of "Hegelian" "weakness" on Engels' part. As a matter of fact, however, these words briefly express the experience of one of the great proletarian revolutions, the Paris Commune of 1871, of which we shall speak in greater detail in its proper place. As a matter of fact, Engels speaks here of "putting

an end" to the *bourgeois* state by the proletarian revolution, while the words about its withering away refer to the remnants of the *proletarian* state *after* the Socialist revolution. According to Engels the bourgeois state does not "wither away," but is "*put an end to*" by the proletariat in the course of the revolution. What withers away after the revolution is the proletarian state or semi-state.

Secondly, the state is a "special repressive force." Engels gives this splendid and extremely profound definition here with complete lucidity. And from it follows that the "special repressive force" for the suppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, for the suppression of the millions of toilers by a handful of the rich, must be superseded by a "special repressive force" for the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat (the dictatorship of the proletariat). This is precisely what is meant by "putting an end to the state as the state." This is precisely the "act" of taking possession of the means of production in the name of society. And it is obvious that *such* a substitution of one (bourgeois) "special repressive force" for another (proletarian) "special repressive force" cannot possibly take place in the form of "withering away."

Thirdly, in regard to the state "withering away," and the even more expressive and colourful "ceasing of itself," Engels refers quite clearly and definitely to the period *after* "the state has taken possession of the means of production in the name of society," that is, *after* the Socialist revolution. We all know that the political form of the "state" at that time is the most complete democracy. But it never enters the head of any of the opportunists who shamelessly distort Marxism that Engels here speaks of *democracy* "withering away," or "ceasing of itself." This seems very strange at first sight; but it is "unintelligible" only to those who have not pondered over the fact that democracy is *also* a state and that, consequently, democracy will also disappear when the state disappears. Revolution alone can "put an end" to the

bourgeois state. The state in general, *i.e.*, the most complete democracy, can only "wither away."

Fourthly, after formulating his famous proposition that "the state withers away," Engels at once explains concretely that this proposition is directed equally against the opportunists and the anarchists. In doing this, however, Engels puts in the forefront the conclusion deduced from the proposition, the "state withers away," which is directed against the opportunists.

One can wager that out of every 10,000 persons who have read or heard about the "withering away" of the state, 9,990 do not know, or do not remember, that Engels did not direct the conclusions he deduced from this proposition against the anarchists *alone*. Of the remaining ten, probably nine do not know the meaning of "free people's state" or why an attack on this watchword contains an attack on the opportunists. This is how history is written! This is how a great revolutionary doctrine is imperceptibly falsified and adapted to prevailing philistinism! The conclusion drawn against the anarchists has been repeated thousands of times, vulgarized, dinned into people's heads in the crudest fashion and has acquired the strength of a prejudice; whereas the conclusion drawn against the opportunists has been hushed up and "forgotten"!

The "free people's state" was a program demand and a popular slogan of the German Social-Democrats in the 'seventies. The only political content of this slogan is a pompous philistine description of the concept democracy. In so far as it hinted in a lawful manner at a democratic republic, Engels was prepared to "justify" its use "for a time" from an agitational point of view. But it was an opportunist slogan, for it not only expressed an embellishment of bourgeois democracy, but also a lack of understanding of the Socialist criticism of the state in general. We are in favour of a democratic republic as the best form of state for the proletariat under capitalism; but we have no right to forget

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that wage-slavery is the lot of the people even in the most democratic bourgeois republic. Furthermore, every state is a "special repressive force" for the suppression of the oppressed class. Consequently, no state is a "free" or a "people's state." Marx and Engels explained this repeatedly to their party comrades in the 'seventies.

Fifthly, this very same work of Engels', of which everyone remembers the argument about the "withering away" of the state, also contains a disquisition on the significance of violent revolution. Engels' historical analysis of its role becomes a veritable panegyric on violent revolution. This "no one remembers"; it is not good form in modern Socialist parties to talk or even think about the importance of this idea, and it plays no part whatever in their daily propaganda and agitation among the masses. And yet, it is inseparably bound up with the "withering away" of the state into one harmonious whole.

Here is Engels' argument:

"That force, however, plays yet another role [other than that of a diabolical power] in history, a revolutionary role; that, in the words of Marx, it is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with the new; that it is the instrument by the aid of which the social movement forces its way through and shatters the dead, fossilized, political forms—of this there is not a word in Herr Dühring. It is only with sighs and groans that he admits the possibility that force will perhaps be necessary for the overthrow of the economic system of exploitation—unfortunately, because all use of force, forsooth, demoralizes the person who uses it. And this in spite of the immense moral and spiritual impetus which has resulted from every victorious revolution! And this in Germany, where a violent collision—which indeed may be forced on the people—would at least have the advantage of wiping out the servility

which has permeated the national consciousness as a result of the humiliation of the Thirty Years' War.* And this person's mode of thought—lifeless, insipid and impotent—claims to impose itself on the most revolutionary party which history has known!" (P. 193 of the third German edition, end of Chap. IV. Part II.)

How can this panegyric on violent revolution, which Engels insistently brought to the attention of the German Social-Democrats between 1878 and 1894, *i.e.*, right up to the time of his death, be combined with the theory of the "withering away" of the state to form a single doctrine?

Usually the two views are combined by means of eclecticism, by an unprincipled, or sophistic, arbitrary selection (or a selection to please the powers that be) of one or another argument, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred (if not more often), it is the idea of the "withering away" that is specially emphasized. Eclecticism is substituted for dialectics—this is the most usual, the most widespread phenomenon to be met with in present-day official Social-Democratic literature on Marxism. This sort of substitution is not new, of course, it is observed even in the history of classic Greek philosophy. In painting Marxism to look like opportunism, the substitution of eclecticism for dialectics is the best method of deceiving the masses; it gives an illusory satisfaction; it seems to take into account all sides of the process, all tendencies of development, all the conflicting influences, and so forth, whereas in reality it presents no consistent and revolutionary conception of the process of social development at all.

* The reference here is to the Thirty Years' War (1618-48) which began in Germany as a struggle of the German feudal princes against the power of the emperor. Subsequently, however, due to the fact that the majority of the European countries became involved in the struggle, the war took on an international character. The Thirty Years' War led to the further political dismemberment of Germany, besides despoiling and devastating the country to an extreme degree.—*Ed.*

We have already said above, and shall show more fully later, that the doctrine of Marx and Engels concerning the inevitability of a violent revolution refers to the bourgeois state. The latter *cannot* be superseded by the proletarian state (the dictatorship of the proletariat) in the process of "withering away"; as a general rule, this can happen only by means of a violent revolution. The panegyric Engels sang in its honour, and which fully corresponds to Marx's repeated declarations (recall the concluding passages of *The Poverty of Philosophy* and *The Communist Manifesto*, with their proud and open declaration of the inevitability of a violent revolution; recall Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program** of 1875, in which, almost thirty years later, he mercilessly castigates the opportunist character of that program)—this panegyric is by no means a mere "impulse," a mere declamation or a polemical sally. The necessity of systematically imbuing the masses with *this* and precisely this view of violent revolution lies at the root of the *whole* of Marx's and Engels' doctrine. The betrayal of their doctrine by the social-chauvinist and Kautskyan trends which now predominate is brought out in striking relief by the neglect of *such* propaganda and agitation by both these trends.

The substitution of the proletarian state for the bourgeois state is impossible without a violent revolution. The abolition of the proletarian state, *i.e.*, of the state in general, is impossible except through the process of "withering away."

Marx and Engels fully and concretely enlarged on these views in studying each revolutionary situation separately, in analysing the lessons of the experience of each individual revolution. We shall now proceed to discuss this, undoubtedly the most important part of their doctrine.

* *Gotha Program*—the program of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany adopted at the Gotha Congress in 1875.—Ed.

CHAPTER II

THE STATE AND REVOLUTION. THE EXPERIENCE OF 1848-51

1. THE EVE OF THE REVOLUTION

THE FIRST works of mature Marxism—*The Poverty of Philosophy* and *The Communist Manifesto*—appeared on the eve of the Revolution of 1848. For this reason, in addition to presenting the general principles of Marxism, they reflect to a certain degree the concrete revolutionary situation of the time. Hence, it will be more expedient, perhaps, to examine what the authors of these works said about the state immediately before they drew conclusions from the experience of the years 1848-51.

In *The Poverty of Philosophy* Marx wrote:

“The working class in the course of its development will substitute for the old civil society an association which will exclude classes and their antagonism, and there will be no more political power properly so-called, since political power is precisely the official expression of class antagonism in civil society” (p. 182 of the German edition of 1885).

It is instructive to compare this general statement of the idea of the state disappearing after classes have been abolished with the statement contained in *The Communist Manifesto*, writ-

ten by Marx and Engels a few months later—to be exact, in November 1847:

“In depicting the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society, up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat. . . .

“..We have seen above that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.

“The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, *i.e.*, of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible” (pp. 31 and 37 of the seventh German edition of 1906).

Here we have a formulation of one of the most remarkable and most important ideas of Marxism on the subject of the state, namely, the idea of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” (as Marx and Engels began to call it after the Paris Commune); and also a very interesting definition of the state which also belongs to the category of the “forgotten words” of Marxism: “*the state,*” *i.e.*, “*the proletariat organized as the ruling class.*”

This definition of the state has never been explained in the prevailing propaganda and agitation literature of the official Social-Democratic parties. More than that, it has been forgotten, for it is absolutely irreconcilable with reformism, and is a slap in the face of the common opportunist prejudices and philistine illusions about the “peaceful development, of democracy.”

The proletariat needs the state—this is repeated by all the opportunists, social-chauvinists and Kautskyites, who assure us that this is what Marx taught. But they “forget” to add that, in the first place, according to Marx, the proletariat needs only a state which is withering away, *i.e.*, a state so constituted that it begins to wither away immediately, and cannot but wither away. Secondly, the toilers need a “state,” *i.e.*, “the proletariat organized as the ruling class.”

The state is a special organization of force; it is the organization of violence for the suppression of some class. What class must the proletariat suppress? Naturally, only the exploiting class, *i.e.*, the bourgeoisie. The toilers need a state only to overcome the resistance of the exploiters, and only the proletariat can direct this suppression, carry it out; for the proletariat is the only class that is consistently revolutionary, the only class that can unite all the toilers and the exploited in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, in completely displacing it.

The exploiting classes need political rule in order to maintain exploitation, *i.e.*, in the selfish interests of an insignificant minority and against the interests of the vast majority of the people. The exploited classes need political rule in order completely to abolish all exploitation, *i.e.*, in the interests of the vast majority of the people, and against the interests of the insignificant minority consisting of the modern slave-owners—the landlords and the capitalists.

The petty-bourgeois democrats, those alleged Socialists who substituted dreams of class harmony for the class struggle, even pictured the Socialist reformation in a dreamy fashion—not in the form of the overthrow of the rule of the exploiting class, but in the form of the peaceful submission of the minority to the majority which has become conscious of its aims. This petty-bourgeois utopia, which is inseparably bound up with the idea of the state

being above classes, led in practice to the betrayal of the interests of the toiling classes, as was shown, for example, by the history of the French revolutions of 1848 and 1871, and by the "Socialists" joining bourgeois cabinets in England, France, Italy and other countries at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.

Marx fought all his life against this petty-bourgeois Socialism—now resurrected in Russia by the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik parties. He logically pursued his doctrine of the class struggle to the doctrine of political power, the doctrine of the state.

The overthrow of bourgeois rule can be accomplished only by the proletariat, as the particular class whose economic conditions of existence train it for this task and provide it with the opportunity and the power to perform it. While the bourgeoisie breaks up and disintegrates the peasantry and all the petty-bourgeois strata, it welds together, unites and organizes the proletariat. Only the proletariat—by virtue of the economic role it plays in large-scale production—is capable of acting as the leader of *all* the toiling and exploited masses, whom the bourgeoisie exploits, oppresses and crushes not less, and often more, than it does the proletarians, but who are incapable of waging an *independent* struggle for their emancipation.

The doctrine of the class struggle, as applied by Marx to the question of the state and of the Socialist revolution, leads inevitably to the recognition of the *political rule* of the proletariat, of its dictatorship, *i.e.*, of power shared with none and relying directly upon the armed force of the masses. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie can be achieved only by the proletariat becoming transformed into the *ruling class*, capable of crushing the inevitable and desperate resistance of the bourgeoisie, and of organizing all the toiling and exploited masses for the new economic order.

The proletariat needs state power, the centralized organization of force, the organization of violence, for the purpose of crushing the resistance of the exploiters and for the purpose of *leading* the great mass of the population—the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, the semi-proletarians—in the work of organizing Socialist economy.

By educating the workers' party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat which is capable of assuming power and of *leading the whole people* to Socialism, of directing and organizing the new order, of being the teacher, guide and leader of all the toilers and exploited in the task of building up their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie. As against this, the opportunism which now predominates breeds in the ranks of the workers' party representatives of the better paid workers, who lose touch with the rank and file, "get along" fairly well under capitalism, and sell their birthright for a mess of pottage, *i.e.*, renounce their role of revolutionary leaders of the people against the bourgeoisie.

Marx's theory: "The state, *i.e.*, the proletariat organized as the ruling class," is "inseparably bound up with all he taught on the revolutionary role of the proletariat in history. The culmination of this role is the proletarian dictatorship, the political rule of the proletariat.

But if the proletariat needs a state as a *special* form of organization of violence *against* the bourgeoisie, the following deduction automatically arises: is it conceivable that such an organization can be created without first abolishing, destroying the state machine created by the bourgeoisie for *itself*. *The Communist Manifesto* leads straight to this deduction, and it is of this deduction, that Marx speaks when summing up the experience of the Revolution of 1848-51.

2. THE REVOLUTION SUMMED UP

Marx sums up the Revolution of 1848-51, in connection with the question of the state we are concerned with, in the following passage in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*:

"...But the revolution is thoroughgoing. It is still in process of passing through purgatory. It does its work methodically. By December 2, 1851 [the day of Louis Bonaparte's *coup d'état*], it had completed one-half of its preparatory work; it is now completing the other half. First it perfected the parliamentary power, in order to be able to overthrow it. Now that it has attained this, it perfects the *executive power*, reduces it to its purest expression, isolates it, sets it up against itself as the sole target, in order to concentrate *all its forces of destruction against it* [italics ours]. And when it has done this second half of its preliminary work, Europe will leap from her seat and exultantly exclaim: well grubbed, old mole!

"This executive power with its monstrous bureaucratic and military organization, with its artificial state machinery embracing wide strata, with a host of officials numbering half a million, besides an army of another half million, this appalling parasitic growth, which enmeshes the body of French society like a net and chokes all its pores, sprang up in the days of the absolute monarchy, with the decay of the feudal system, which it helped to hasten." The first French Revolution developed centralization, "but at the same time [it developed] the extent, the attributes and the agents of governmental authority. Napoleon perfected this state machinery." The legitimatist monarchy and the July monarchy "added nothing but a greater division of labour..."

"The parliamentary republic finally, in its struggle against the revolution, found itself compelled to strengthen, along with the repressive measures, the resources and centralization of governmental power. *All the revolutions perfected this machine, instead of smashing it up* [italics ours]. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded the possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victor" (*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, pp. 98-99, fourth edition, Hamburg, 1907).

In this remarkable passage Marxism takes a tremendous step forward compared with *The Communist Manifesto*. In the latter, the question of the state is still treated in an extremely abstract manner, in the most general terms and expressions. In the above-quoted passage, the question is treated in a concrete manner, and the conclusion is most precise, definite, practical and palpable: all the revolutions which have occurred up to now have helped to perfect the state machine, whereas it must be smashed, broken.

This conclusion is the chief and fundamental thesis in the Marxian doctrine of the state. And it is precisely this fundamental thesis which has been not only completely *forgotten* by the predominant official Social-Democratic Parties, but positively *distorted* (as we shall see later) by the foremost theoretician of the Second International, K. Kautsky.

The Communist Manifesto gives a general summary of history, which compels us to regard the state as the organ of class rule and leads us to the inevitable conclusion that the proletariat cannot overthrow the bourgeoisie without first capturing political power, without attaining political supremacy, without transforming the state into the "proletariat organized as the ruling class"; it inevitably leads to the conclusion that this proletarian state will begin

to wither away immediately after its victory, because the state is unnecessary and cannot exist in a society in which there are no class antagonisms. The question as to how, from the point of view of historical development, the substitution of the proletarian state for the bourgeois state is to take place is not raised.

Marx raises this question and answers it in 1852. True to his philosophy of dialectical materialism, Marx takes as his basis the experience of the great years of revolution, 1848 to 1851. Here, as everywhere, his teaching is the *summary of experience*, illuminated by a profound philosophical conception of the world and a rich knowledge of history.

The problem of the state is put concretely: how did the bourgeois state, the state machine necessary for the rule of the bourgeoisie, come into being historically? What changes did it undergo, what evolution did it undergo in the course of the bourgeois revolutions and in the face of the independent actions of the oppressed classes? What are the tasks of the proletariat in relation to this state machine?

The centralized state power that is peculiar to bourgeois society came into being in the period of the fall of absolutism. Two institutions are most characteristic of this state machine: bureaucracy and a standing army. In their works, Marx and Engels repeatedly mention the thousand threads which connect these institutions with the bourgeoisie. The experience of every worker illustrates this connection in an extremely striking and impressive manner. From its own bitter experience, the working class learns to recognize this connection; that is why it learns so quickly and why it so completely assimilates the doctrine which reveals this inevitable connection, a doctrine which the petty-bourgeois democrats either ignorantly and light-heartedly deny, or, still more light-heartedly, admit "in general," forgetting to draw the corresponding practical conclusions.

The bureaucracy and the standing army are a "parasite" on the body of bourgeois society—a parasite created by the inherent antagonisms which rend that society, but a parasite which "chokes all its pores" of life. The Kautskyan opportunism now prevalent in official Social-Democracy considers the view that the state is a *parasitic growth* to be the peculiar and exclusive attribute of anarchism. Naturally, this distortion of Marxism is extremely useful to those philistines who have so utterly disgraced Socialism by justifying and embellishing the imperialist war with the term "defence of the fatherland"; but it is an absolute distortion nevertheless.

The development, perfection and strengthening of the bureaucratic and military apparatus proceeded during all the numerous bourgeois revolutions which Europe has witnessed since the fall of feudalism. It is precisely the petty bourgeoisie that is attracted to the side of the big bourgeoisie and is subordinated to it to a large extent by means of this apparatus, which provides the upper strata of the peasantry, small artisans, tradesmen and the like with comparatively comfortable, quiet and respectable jobs which raise their holders *above* the people. Consider what happened in Russia during the six months following February 27, 1917. The governmental posts which hitherto had been given by preference to members of the Black-Hundreds now became the spoils of the Cadets, Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. Nobody really thought of introducing any serious reforms; every effort was made to put them off "until the Constituent Assembly was convened"; and to steadily put off the convocation of the Constituent Assembly until the end of the war! But there was no delay, no waiting for the Constituent Assembly in the matter of dividing the spoils, of getting the posts of ministers, vice-ministers, governors-general, etc., etc.! The game of combinations that was played in forming the government was, in essence, only an expression of this division and re-division of

the "spoils," which was going on high and low, throughout the country, in every department of central and local government. The six months between February 27 and August 27, 1917, can be summed up, objectively summed up beyond all dispute, as follows: reforms shelved, distribution of official posts accomplished and "mistakes" in the distribution corrected by a few re-distributions.

But the more the bureaucratic apparatus is "re-distributed" among the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties (among the Cadets, Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, if we take the case of Russia), the more clearly the oppressed classes, with the proletariat at their head, become conscious of their irreconcilable hostility to the *whole* of bourgeois society. That is why it is necessary for all bourgeois parties, even for the most democratic and "revolutionary-democratic" parties, to increase their repressive measures against the revolutionary proletariat, to strengthen the apparatus of repression, *i.e.*, the state machine that we are discussing. This course of events compels the revolution *"to concentrate all its forces of destruction"* against the state power, and to regard the problem, not as one of perfecting the state machine, but one of *smashing and destroying it*.

It was not logical reasoning, but the actual development of events, the living experience of 1848-51, that led to the problem being presented in this way. The extent to which Marx held strictly to the solid ground of historical experience can be seen from the fact that, in 1852, he did not yet deal concretely with the question of *what* was to take the place of the state machine that was to be destroyed. Experience had not yet provided material for the solution of this problem which history placed on the order of the day later on, in 1871. In 1852 it was only possible to establish with the accuracy of scientific observation that the proletarian revolution *had approached* the task of "concentrating all its forces of destruction" against the state, of "breaking" the state machine.

Here the question may arise: is it correct to generalize the experience, observations and conclusions of Marx, to apply them to a field that is wider than the history of France during the three years 1848-51? Before proceeding to answer this question we shall recall a remark made by Engels, and then we shall proceed to examine the facts. In his introduction to the third edition of *The Eighteenth Brumaire* Engels wrote:

“France is the land, where, more than anywhere else, the historical class struggles were each time fought out to a decision, and where, consequently, the changing political forms within which they occur and in which their results are summarized have likewise been stamped with the sharpest outlines. The centre of feudalism in the Middle Ages, the model country of centralized monarchy resting on estates since the Renaissance, France has demolished feudalism in the Great Revolution and established the unalloyed rule of the bourgeoisie in a classical purity unequalled by any other European land. And the struggle of the upward striving proletariat against the ruling bourgeoisie also appeared here in an acute form unknown elsewhere” (p. 4 of the 1907 edition).

The last sentence is out of date, inasmuch as a lull has occurred in the revolutionary struggle of the French proletariat since 1871; although, long as this lull may be, it does not preclude the possibility that, in the coming proletarian revolution, France may once again reveal itself as the classic land of the class struggle to a finish.

Let us, however, cast a general glance over the history of the advanced countries at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. We shall see that the same process has been going on more slowly, in more varied forms, on a much wider

field: on the one hand, the development of "parliamentary power" in the republican countries (France, America, Switzerland), as well as in the monarchies (England, Germany to a certain extent, Italy, the Scandinavian countries, etc.); on the other hand, a struggle for power between the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties which distribute and re-distribute the "spoils" of office, while the foundations of bourgeois society remain unchanged. Finally, the perfection and consolidation of the "executive power," its bureaucratic and military apparatus.

There is not the slightest doubt that these features are common to the whole of the modern evolution of all capitalist states in general. In the three years 1848-51 France displayed, in a swift, sharp concentrated form, all the processes of development which are peculiar to the whole capitalist world.

Imperialism—the era of bank capital, the era of gigantic capitalist monopolies, the era of the transformation of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism—has particularly witnessed an unprecedented strengthening of the "state machine" and an unprecedented growth of its bureaucratic and military apparatus, in connection with the increase in repressive measures against the proletariat in the monarchical as well as in the freest republican countries.

World history is now undoubtedly leading to the "concentration of all the forces" of the proletarian revolution on the "destruction" of the state machine on an incomparably larger scale than in 1852.

What the proletariat will put in its place is indicated by the extremely instructive material provided by the Paris Commune.

3. THE PRESENTATION OF THE QUESTION BY MARX IN 1852*

In 1907, Mehring, in the magazine *Neue Zeit*** (Vol. XXV, 2, p. 164), published extracts from a letter from Marx to Weydemeyer dated March 5, 1852. This letter, among other things, contains the following remarkable observation:

“And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society, nor yet the struggle between them. Long before me, bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle, and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove: 1) that the *existence of classes* is only bound up with particular, *historic phases in the development of production* [*historische Entwicklungsphasen der Production*]; 2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the *dictatorship of the proletariat*; 3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*.”***

In these words Marx succeeded in expressing with striking clarity, first, the chief and radical difference between his doctrine and that of the foremost and most profound thinkers of the bourgeoisie; and, second, the essence of his doctrine of the state.

It is often said and written that the core of Marx's theory is the class struggle; but this is not true. And from this error very often springs the opportunist distortion of Marxism, its falsification to make it acceptable to the bourgeoisie. For the doctrine of

* This section was added by Lenin in the second Russian edition of *The State and Revolution*, 1919.—Ed.

** *Neue Zeit* (*New Times*)—the theoretical organ of German Social-Democracy, published from 1883 to 1923.—Ed.

*** *The Correspondence of Marx and Engels*.—Ed.

the class struggle was created *not* by Marx, but by the bourgeoisie *before* Marx, and generally speaking it is *acceptable* to the bourgeoisie. Those who recognize *only* the class struggle are not yet Marxists; they may be found to be still within the boundaries of bourgeois reasoning and bourgeois politics. To limit Marxism to the doctrine of the class struggle means curtailing Marxism, distorting it, reducing it to something which is acceptable to the bourgeois. Only he is a Marxist who *extends* the acceptance of the class struggle to the acceptance of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. This is where the profound difference lies between a Marxist and an ordinary petty (and even big) bourgeois. This is the touchstone on which the *real* understanding and acceptance of Marxism should be tested. And it is not surprising that when the history of Europe brought the working class face to face with this question in a *practical* way, not only all the opportunists and reformists, but all the Kautskyites (people who vacillate between reformism and Marxism) proved to be miserable philistines and petty-bourgeois democrats who *repudiated* the dictatorship of the proletariat. Kautsky's pamphlet, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, published in August 1918, *i.e.*, long after the first edition of the present pamphlet, is an example of petty-bourgeois distortion of Marxism and base renunciation of it *in practice*, while hypocritically recognizing it *in words* (see my pamphlet, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, Petrograd and Moscow, 1918).

Present-day opportunism in the person of its principal representative, the ex-Marxist, K. Kautsky, fits in completely with Marx's characterization of the *bourgeois* position quoted above, for this opportunism limits the field of recognition of the class struggle to the realm of bourgeois relationships. (Within this realm, within its framework, not a single educated liberal will refuse to recognize the class struggle "in principle"!) Opportunism *does not*

carry the recognition of class struggle to the main point, to the period of *transition* from capitalism to Communism, to the period of the overthrow and complete abolition of the bourgeoisie. In reality, this period inevitably becomes a period of an unprecedentedly violent class struggle in unprecedentedly acute forms and, consequently, during this period the state must inevitably be a state that is democratic *in a new way* (for the proletariat and the propertyless in general) and dictatorial *in a new way* (against the bourgeoisie).

To proceed. The essence of Marx's doctrine of the state is assimilated only by those who understand that the dictatorship of a *single* class is necessary not only for class society in general, not only for the *proletariat* which has overthrown the bourgeoisie, but for the entire *historical period* which separates capitalism from "classless society," from Communism. The forms of bourgeois states are extremely varied, but in essence they are all the same: in one way or another, in the final analysis, all these states are inevitably the *dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*. The transition from capitalism to Communism will certainly create a great variety and abundance of political forms, but their essence will inevitably be the same: the *dictatorship of the proletariat*.

CHAPTER III
THE STATE AND REVOLUTION.
EXPERIENCE OF THE PARIS COMMUNE
OF 1871. MARX'S ANALYSIS

1. WHEREIN LAY THE HEROISM OF THE COMMUNARDS'
ATTEMPT?

IT IS WELL known that in the autumn of 1870, a few months before the Commune, Marx warned the Paris workers that any attempt to overthrow the government would be the folly of despair. But when, in March 1871, a decisive battle was *forced* upon the workers and they accepted it, when the uprising had become a fact, Marx greeted the proletarian revolution with the greatest enthusiasm, in spite of unfavourable auguries. Marx did not assume the rigid attitude of pedantically condemning an "untimely" movement as did the ill-famed Russian renegade from Marxism, Plekhanov, who, in November 1905, wrote encouragingly about the workers' and peasants' struggle, but after December 1905, cried, liberal fashion: "They should not have taken to arms."

Marx, however, was not only enthusiastic about the heroism of the Communards who "stormed Heaven," as he expressed it. Although it did not achieve its aim, he regarded the mass revolutionary movement as a historic experiment of momentous importance, as an advance of the world proletarian revolution, as a practical step that was more important than hundreds of programs

and discussions. Marx conceived his task to be to analyse this experiment, to draw lessons in tactics from it, to re-examine his theory in the new light it afforded.

The only "correction" Marx thought it necessary to make in *The Communist Manifesto*, he made on the basis of the revolutionary experience of the Paris Communards.

The last preface to the new German edition of *The Communist Manifesto*, signed by both its authors, is dated June 24, 1872. In this preface the authors, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, say that the program of *The Communist Manifesto* "has in some details become antiquated" now, and they go on to say:

"One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.'"

The authors took the words in single quotation marks in this passage from Marx's book, *The Civil War in France*.

Thus, Marx and Engels regarded one of the principal and fundamental lessons of the Paris Commune as being of such momentous importance that they introduced it as a vital correction into *The Communist Manifesto*.

It is extremely characteristic that it is precisely this vital correction that has been distorted by the opportunists, and its meaning, probably, is not known to nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine hundredths, of the readers of *The Communist Manifesto*. We shall deal with this distortion more fully further on, in a chapter devoted specially to distortions. Here it will be sufficient to note that the current vulgar "interpretation" of Marx's famous utterance just quoted is that Marx here emphasizes the idea of gradual development in contradistinction to the seizure of power, and so on.

As a matter of fact, *exactly the opposite is the case*. Marx's idea is that the working class must *break up*,

smash the "ready-made state machinery," and not confine itself merely to laying hold of it.

On April 12, 1871, *i.e.*, just at the time of the Commune, Marx wrote to Kugelmann:

"If you look at the last chapter of my *Eighteenth Brumaire*, you will find that I say that the next attempt of the French revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic military machine from one hand to another, but to *smash* it [Marx's italics—the original is *zerbrechen*], and that is a preliminary condition for every real people's revolution on the continent. And this is what our heroic Party comrades in Paris are attempting." (*Neue Zeit*, Vol. XX, 1, 1901-02, p. 709. The letters of Marx to Kugelmann have come out in Russian in no less than two editions, one of them edited and with an introduction by me.*)

The words, "to smash the bureaucratic-military state machine," briefly express the principal lesson of Marxism on the tasks of the proletariat in relation to the state during a revolution. And, it is precisely this lesson that has been not only completely forgotten, but positively distorted, in the prevailing Kautskyan "interpretation" of Marxism.

As for Marx's reference to *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, we quoted the corresponding passage in full above.

It is interesting to note two particular points in the above quoted passage in Marx's argument. First, he confines his conclusions to the Continent. This was natural in 1871, when England was still the model of a purely capitalist country, but without militarism and, to a considerable degree, without a bureaucracy. Hence, Marx excluded England, where a revolution, even a people's

* See Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. XI, Eng. ed., p. 712.—*Ed.*

revolution, could be conceived of, and was then possible, *without* the condition of first destroying the "ready-made state machinery."

Today, in 1917, in the epoch of the first great imperialist war, this qualification made by Marx is no longer valid. Both England and America, the greatest and last representatives—in the whole world—of Anglo-Saxon "liberty," in the sense that militarism and bureaucracy were absent, have today plunged headlong into the all-European filthy, bloody morass of bureaucratic-military institutions to which everything is subordinated and which trample everything underfoot. Today, in England and in America, too, the "preliminary condition for every real people's revolution" is the *smashing*, the *destruction* of the "ready-made state machinery" (brought in those countries, between 1914 and 1917, to general "European," imperialist perfection).

Secondly, particular attention should be paid to Marx's extremely profound remark that the destruction of the bureaucratic-military state machine is "a preliminary condition for every real *people's* revolution." This idea of a "people's" revolution seems strange coming from Marx and the Russian Plekhanovites and Mensheviks, those followers of Struve who wish to be regarded as Marxists, might possibly declare such an expression to be a "slip of the pen." They have reduced Marxism to such a state of wretched "liberal" distortion that nothing exists for them beyond the antithesis between bourgeois revolution and proletarian revolution ---and even this antithesis they interpret in an utterly lifeless way.

If, for example, we take the revolutions of the twentieth century, we shall, of course, have to admit that the Portuguese and the Turkish revolutions are both bourgeois revolutions.* Neither, however, is a "people's" revolution inasmuch as in neither of them does the mass of the people, the enormous majority, come out

* This refers to the bourgeois revolutions in Portugal (February 1908) and in Turkey (August 1908).—*Ed.*

actively, independently, with its own economic and political demands to any noticeable degree. On the other hand, although the Russian bourgeois revolution of 1905-07 presented no such "brilliant" successes as at times fell to the lot of the Portuguese and Turkish revolutions, it was undoubtedly a "real people's" revolution, since the mass of the people, the majority, the "lowest social ranks," crushed by oppression and exploitation, rose independently and put on the entire course of the revolution the impress of *their* demands, of *their* attempts to build in their own way a new society in place of the old society that was being destroyed.

In Europe, in 1871, there was not a single country on the Continent in which the proletariat constituted the majority of the people. A "people's" revolution, one that actually swept the majority into its stream, could be such only if it embraced both the proletariat and the peasantry. These two classes then constituted the "people." These two classes were united by the fact that the "bureaucratic-military state machine" oppressed, crushed, exploited them. To *smash* this machine, to *break it up*—this is what is truly in the interests of the "people," of the majority, of the workers and most of the peasants, this is what is "the preliminary condition" for a free alliance between the poor peasants and the proletarians; without such an alliance democracy is unstable and Socialist transformation is impossible.

As is well known, the Paris Commune strove for such an alliance, although it failed to achieve it owing to a number of circumstances, internal and external.

Consequently, in speaking of a "real people's revolution," Marx, without in the least forgetting the peculiar characteristics of the petty bourgeoisie (he spoke a great deal about them and often), took strict account of the class relations that actually existed in the majority of continental countries in Europe in 1871. On the other hand, he asserted that the "smashing" of the state ma-

chine was necessary in the interests of the workers and of the peasants, that it unites them, that it places before them the common task of removing the "parasite" and of superseding it by something new.

By what exactly?

2. WHAT IS TO SUPERSEDE THE SMASHED STATE MACHINE?

In 1847, in *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx's answer to this question was still a purely abstract one, or, to speak more correctly, it was an answer that indicated the problem, but did not solve it. The answer given in *The Communist Manifesto* was that "the proletariat organized as the ruling class," the "winning of the battle of democracy" was to supersede this machine.

Marx did not drop into utopia; he expected the *experience* of the mass movement to provide the reply to the question of the exact forms the organization of the proletariat as the ruling class will assume and the exact manner in which this organization will be combined with the most complete, most consistent "winning of the battle of democracy."

Marx subjected the experience of the Commune, meagre as it was, to the most careful analysis in *The Civil War in France*. Let us quote the most important passages of this work.

"Originating from the days of the Middle Ages, there developed in the nineteenth century "the centralized state power, with its ubiquitous organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy and judicature." With the development of class antagonisms between capital and labour, "...the state power assumed more and more the character of the national power of capital over labour, of a public force organized for social enslavement, of an engine of class despotism. After every rev-

olution marking a progressive phase in the class struggle, the purely repressive character of the state power stands out in bolder and bolder relief." After the Revolution of 1848-49, the state power became "the national war engine of capital against labour." The Second Empire* consolidated this.

"The direct antithesis to the Empire was the Commune. It was the "positive form" of "a republic that was not only to supersede the monarchial form of class rule, but class rule itself."

What was this "positive" form of the proletarian, the Socialist republic? What was the state it was beginning to create?

"The first decree of the Commune . . . was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people."

This demand now figures in the program of every party calling itself Socialist. But the value of their programs is best shown by the behaviour of our Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, who, precisely after the revolution of February 27, refused to carry out this demand!

"The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. . . . Instead of continuing to be the agent of the Central Government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration.

* *Second Empire*—i.e., the empire under Napoleon III—Louis Bonaparte (1852-70) as distinct from that of Napoleon I (1804-14).—Ed.

From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at *workmen's wages*. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves. . . .

“Having once got rid of the standing army and the police, the physical force elements of the old government, the Commune was anxious to break the spiritual force of repression, the ‘parson-power’. . . .

“The judicial functionaries were to be divested of [their] sham independence. . . .” “they were to be elective, responsible and revocable.”

Thus the Commune appears to have substituted “only” fuller democracy for the smashed state machine: abolition of the standing army; all officials to be elected and subject to recall. But as a matter of fact this “only” signifies a gigantic supersession of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different order. This is a case of “quantity becoming transformed into quality”: democracy, introduced as fully and consistently as is in general conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois democracy into proletarian democracy; from the state (=a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into something which is no longer really a state.

It is still necessary to suppress the bourgeoisie and crush its resistance. This was particularly necessary for the Commune; and one of the reasons for its defeat was that it did not do this with sufficient determination. But the organ of suppression is now the majority of the population, and not a minority, as was always the case under slavery, serfdom and wage-slavery. And since the majority of the people *itself* suppresses its oppressors, a “special force” for suppression is *no longer necessary*! In this sense the state *begins to wither away*. Instead of the special institutions of

a privileged minority (privileged officialdom, the command of the standing army), the majority itself can directly fulfil all these functions, and the more the functions of state power devolve upon the people generally the less need is there for the existence of this power.

In this connection the measures of the Commune emphasized by Marx are particularly noteworthy, *viz.*, the abolition of all representation allowances, and of all monetary privileges in the case of officials, the reduction of the remuneration of *all* servants of the state to the level of "*workmen's wages*." This shows more clearly than anything else the *turn* from bourgeois democracy to proletarian democracy, from the democracy of the oppressors to the democracy of the oppressed classes, from the state as a "special force" for the suppression of a definite class to the suppression of the oppressors by the *general force* of the majority of the people—the workers and the peasants. And it is precisely on this most striking point, perhaps the most important as far as the problem of the state is concerned, that the teachings of Marx have been most completely forgotten! In popular commentaries, the number of which is legion, this is not mentioned. It is "good form" to keep silent about it as if it were a piece of old-fashioned "naiveté," just as the Christians, after Christianity had attained the status of a state religion, "forgot" the "naiveté" of primitive Christianity with its democratic-revolutionary spirit.

The reduction of the remuneration of the highest state officials seems to be "simply" a demand of naive, primitive democracy. One of the "founders" of modern opportunism, the ex-Social Democrat, Eduard Bernstein, has more than once exercised his talents in repeating the vulgar bourgeois jeers at "primitive" democracy. Like all opportunists, and like the present Kautskyans, he utterly failed to understand that, first of all, the transition from capitalism to Socialism is *impossible* without some "reversion" to "prim-

itive" democracy (for how else can the majority, and even the whole population, proceed to discharge state functions?); and secondly, he forgets that "primitive democracy" based on capitalism and capitalist culture is not the same as primitive democracy in pre-historic or pre-capitalist times. Capitalist culture has *created* large-scale production, factories, railways, the postal service, telephones, etc., and *on this basis* the great majority of the functions of the old "state power" have become so simplified and can be reduced to such simple operations of registration, filing and checking that they can be easily performed by every literate person, can quite easily be performed for ordinary "workmen's wages," and can (and must) be stripped of every shadow of privilege, of every semblance of "official grandeur."

All officials, without exception, elected and subject to recall *at any time*, their salaries reduced to the level of ordinary "workmen's wages"—these simple and "self-evident" democratic measures, while completely uniting the interests of the workers and the majority of the peasants, at the same time serve as a bridge between capitalism and Socialism. These measures concern the purely political reconstruction of society; but, of course, they acquire their full meaning and significance only in connection with the "expropriation of the expropriators" either being accomplished or in preparation, *i.e.*, with the transformation of capitalist private ownership of the means of production into social ownership.

"The Commune," Marx wrote, "made that catchword of bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, a reality by destroying the two greatest sources of expenditure—the standing army and state functionarism."

From the peasantry, as from other sections of the petty bourgeoisie, only an insignificant few "rise to the top," "get on in the

world" in the bourgeois sense, *i.e.*, become either well-to-do people, bourgeois, or officials in secure and privileged positions. In every capitalist country where there is a peasantry (as there is in most capitalist countries), the vast majority of the peasants are oppressed by the government and long for its overthrow, long for "cheap" government. This can be achieved *only* by the proletariat; and by achieving it, the proletariat at the same time takes a step towards the Socialist reconstruction of the state.

3. ABOLITION OF PARLIAMENTARISM

"The Commune," Marx wrote, "was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time. . . ."

"Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent and repress (*vertreten und zertreten*) the people in parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for the workmen and managers in his business."

Thanks to the prevalence of social-chauvinism and opportunism, this remarkable criticism of parliamentarism made in 1871 also belongs now to the "forgotten words" of Marxism. The Cabinet Ministers and professional parliamentarians, the traitors to the proletariat and the "practical" Socialists of our day, have left all criticism of parliamentarism to the anarchists, and, on this wonderfully intelligent ground, they denounce *all* criticism of parliamentarism as "anarchism"!! It is not surprising that the proletariat of the "advanced" parliamentary countries, disgusted with such "Socialists" as Messrs. Scheidemanns, Davids, Legiens, Sembats, Renaudels, Hendersons, Vanderveldes, Staunings, Brant-

ings, Bissolati and Co., has been more and more giving its sympathies to anarcho-syndicalism, in spite of the fact that the latter is but the twin brother of opportunism.

But for Marx revolutionary dialectics was never the empty fashionable phrase, the toy rattle, which Plekhanov, Kautsky and the others have made of it. Marx knew how to break with anarchism ruthlessly for its inability to make use even of the "pig-sty" of bourgeois parliamentarism, especially when the situation is obviously not revolutionary; but at the same time he knew how to subject parliamentarism to genuine revolutionary proletarian criticism.

To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and oppress the people in parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics.

But if it is the state we are to examine, and if parliamentarism is to be regarded as one of the institutions of the state from the point of view of the tasks of the proletariat in *this* field, what is the way out of parliamentarism? How can it be dispensed with?

Once again we must repeat: the lessons of Marx, based on the study of the Commune, have been so completely forgotten that any criticism of parliamentarism, other than anarchist or reactionary criticism, is quite unintelligible to the present-day "social-democrat" (read present-day traitor to Socialism).

The way out of parliamentarism is not, of course, the abolition of the representative institutions and the electoral principle, but the conversion of the representative institutions from mere "talking shops" into working bodies. "The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time."

"A working, not a parliamentary body"—this hits straight

from the shoulder at the present-day parliamentarians and parliamentary "lap-dogs" of Social-Democracy! Take any parliamentary country, from America to Switzerland, from France to England, Norway and so forth—in these countries the actual work of the "state" is done behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, chancelleries and General Staffs. Parliament itself is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the "common people." This is so true that even in the Russian republic, a bourgeois-democratic republic, all these sins of parliamentarism were immediately revealed, even before a real parliament was created. The heroes of rotten philistinism, such as the Skobelevs and Tsere-telis, the Chernovs and Avksentyevs, have managed to pollute even the Soviets with the most disgusting bourgeois parliamentarism and to convert them into mere talking shops. In the Soviets, the Right Honourable "Socialist" Ministers are fooling the credulous rustics with phrasemongering and resolutions. In the government itself a sort of permanent quadrille is going on in order that, on the one hand, as many Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks as possible may in turn get near the "pie," the lucrative and honourable posts, on the other hand, the "attention of the people" may be engaged. Meanwhile, the real "state" business is being done in the chancelleries and General Staffs.

Dyelo Naroda, the organ of the ruling "Socialist-Revolutionary" Party, recently admitted in an editorial article—with the matchless candour of people of "good society," in which "all" are engaged in political prostitution—that even in those ministries of which the "Socialists" (save the mark) are at the head, the whole bureaucratic apparatus has in fact remained as of old, is working in the old way and "freely" sabotaging revolutionary measures. Even without this admission, would not the actual history of the participation of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks in

the government prove this? The only characteristic thing in this is that, in the Ministerial company of the Cadets, Messrs. Chernovs, Russanovs, Zenzinovs and the other editors of *Dyelo Naroda* have so completely lost all sense of shame as to unblushingly proclaim, as if it were a mere bagatelle, that in "their" Ministries everything has remained as of old!! Revolutionary-democratic phrases to gull the rural Simple Simons; bureaucracy and red tape for the "benefit" of the capitalists—that is the *essence* of the "honest" coalition. .

The Commune was to have substituted for the venal and rotten parliamentary of bourgeois society institutions in which freedom of opinion and discussion would not have degenerated into deception, for the parliamentarians would have had to work themselves. would have had to execute their own laws, themselves to test their results in real life, and would have been directly responsible to their constituents. Representative institutions would have remained, but there was to have been *no* parliamentarism as a special system. as the division of labour between the legislative and the executive, as a privileged position for the deputies. We cannot imagine democracy, not even proletarian democracy, without representative institutions, but we can and *must* imagine democracy without parliamentarism, if criticism of bourgeois society is not mere empty words for us, if the desire to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie is our earnest and sincere desire, and not a mere "election" cry for catching workers' votes, as it is with the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, the Scheidemanns, Legiens, Sembats and Vanderveldes.

It is extremely instructive to note that, in speaking of the functions of the officials *who* are necessary for the Commune and for the proletarian democracy, Marx compares them to the workers of "every other employer," that is, of the ordinary capitalist enterprise, with its "workmen, foremen and clerks."

There is no trace of utopianism in Marx, in the sense that he invented or imagined a "new" society. No, he studied the *birth* of the new society from the old, the forms of transition from the latter to the former as a natural-historical process. He examined the actual experience of a mass proletarian movement and tried to draw practical lessons from it. He "learned" from the Commune, just as all the great revolutionary thinkers were not afraid to learn from the experience of the great movements of the oppressed classes, and never preached them pedantic "sermons" (such as Plekhanov's: "they should not have taken to arms"; or Tsereteli's: "A class must limit itself").

There can be no thought of destroying bureaucracy immediately, everywhere and completely. That is utopia. But to *smash* the old bureaucratic machine at once and to begin immediately to construct a new one that will enable all bureaucracy to be gradually abolished is *not* utopia, it is borne out by the experience of the Commune, it is the direct and immediate task of the revolutionary proletariat.

Capitalism simplifies the functions of "state" administration; it makes it possible to throw "official grandeur" aside and to reduce the whole business to a matter of organizing the proletarians (as the ruling class), which will hire "workmen, foremen and clerks" in the name of the whole of society.

We are not utopians, we do not indulge in "dreams" of dispensing at *once* with all administration, with all subordination; these anarchist dreams, based upon a lack of understanding of the tasks of the proletarian dictatorship, are totally alien to Marxism, and, as a matter of fact, serve only to postpone the Socialist revolution until human nature has changed. No, we want the Socialist revolution with human nature as it is now, with human nature that cannot dispense with subordination, control and, "foremen and clerks."

But the subordination must be to the armed vanguard of all the exploited, of all the toilers, *i.e.*, to the proletariat. Measures can and must be taken at once, overnight, to substitute for the specific "official grandeur" of state officials the simple functions of "workmen and managers," functions which are already fully within the capacity of the average city dweller and can well be performed for "workmen's wages."

We *ourselves*, the workers, will organize large-scale production on the basis of what capitalism has already created, relying on our own experience as workers, establishing strict, iron discipline supported by the state power of the armed workers; we shall reduce the role of the state officials to that of simply carrying out our instructions as responsible, revocable, modestly paid "managers" (of course, with the aid of technicians of all sorts. types and degrees). This is *our* proletarian task, this is what we can and must *start* with in carrying out the proletarian revolution. Such a beginning, on the basis of large-scale production, will of itself lead to the gradual "withering away" of all bureaucracy, to the gradual creation of an order, an order without quotation marks, which will be different from wage-slavery, an order in which the functions of control and accounting—becoming more and more simple—will be performed by each in turn, will then become a habit and will finally die out as the *special* functions of a special section of the population.

A witty German Social-Democrat of the seventies of the last century called the *post-office* an example of the Socialist system. This is very true. At present the post-office is a business organized on the lines of a state-*capitalist* monopoly. Imperialism is gradually transforming all trusts into organizations of a similar type, in which, over the "common" toilers, who are overworked and starved, there stands the same bourgeois bureaucracy. But the mechanism of social management is *here* already to hand. Overthrow the

capitalists, crush the resistance of these exploiters with the iron hand of the armed workers, smash the bureaucratic machine of the modern state—and you will have a mechanism of the highest technical equipment, free from the “parasite,” capable of being wielded by the united workers themselves, who will hire their own technicians, managers and bookkeepers, and pay them *all*, as, indeed *all* “state” officials in general, ordinary workmen’s wages. Here is a concrete, practical task, immediately possible of fulfilment in relation to all trusts, a task that will free the toilers from exploitation and take into account what the Commune had already begun to practice (particularly in the field of state construction).

Our immediate object is to organize the *whole* national economy on the lines of the postal system, so that the technicians, managers, bookkeepers, as well as *all* officials, shall receive salaries no higher than “workmen’s wages,” all under the control and leadership of the armed proletariat. It is such a state, standing on such an economic basis, that we need. This is what will bring about the abolition of parliamentarism and the preservation of representative institutions. This is what will rid the labouring classes of the prostitution of these institutions by the bourgeoisie.

4. ORGANIZATION OF NATIONAL UNITY

“... In a rough sketch of national organization which the Commune had no time to develop, it states clearly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest country hamlet. . . .” The Communes were to elect the “National Delegation” in Paris.

“... The few but important functions which still would remain for a central government were not to be suppressed, as has been intentionally misstated, but were to be discharged

by Communal and therefore strictly responsible agents.... The unity of the nation was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, to be organized by the Communal Constitution, and to become a reality by the destruction of the state power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence. While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority usurping pre-eminence over society itself, and restored to the responsible agents of society."

To what extent the opportunists of present-day Social-Democracy have failed to understand—or perhaps it would be more true to say, did not want to understand—these observations of Marx is best shown by the book of Herostratean fame of the renegade Bernstein, *The Premises of Socialism and the Tasks of Social-Democracy*. It is precisely in connection with the above passage from Marx that Bernstein wrote that this program "...in its political content, in all its essential features, displays the greatest similarity to the federalism of Proudhon.... In spite of all the other points of difference between Marx and the 'petty-bourgeois' Proudhon [Bernstein places the word "petty-bourgeois" in quotation marks in order to make it sound ironical], on these points their ways of thinking resemble each other as closely as could be." Of course, Bernstein continues, the importance of the municipalities is growing, but "it seems doubtful to me whether the first task of democracy would be such a dissolution [*Auflösung*] of the modern states and such a complete transformation [*Umwandlung*] of their organization as is visualized by Marx and Proudhon—the formation of a National Assembly from delegates of the provincial or district assemblies, which, in their turn, would consist of dele-

gates from the Communes,— so that the whole previous mode of national representation would vanish completely.” (Bernstein, *Premises*, pp. 134 and 136 of the German edition of 1899).

To confuse Marx's views on the “destruction of the state power—of the parasitic excrescence” with Proudhon's federalism is positively monstrous! But it is not an accident, for it never occurs to the opportunist that Marx does not speak here about federalism as opposed to centralism, but about smashing the old, bourgeois state machine which exists in all bourgeois countries.

The only thing that penetrates the opportunist's mind is what he sees around him, in a society of petty-bourgeois philistinism and “reformist” stagnation, namely, only “municipalities!” The opportunist has even forgotten how to think about proletarian revolution.

It is ridiculous! But the remarkable thing is that nobody disputed Bernstein on this point. Bernstein has been refuted by many, especially by Plekhanov in Russian literature and by Kautsky in European literature, but neither of them said *anything* about *this* distortion of Marx by Bernstein.

To such an extent has the opportunist forgotten to think in a revolutionary way and to ponder over revolution that he attributes “federalism” to Marx and confuses him with the founder of anarchism, Proudhon. And Kautsky and Plekhanov, those would-be orthodox Marxists and defenders of the doctrine of revolutionary Marxism, are silent on this point! Herein lies one of the roots of the extreme vulgarization of the views concerning the difference between Marxism and anarchism which is characteristic of the Kautskyans and of the opportunists, and which we shall discuss later.

Marx's observations on the experience of the Commune just quoted contain not a trace of federalism. Marx agreed with Proudhon on the very point that the opportunist Bernstein failed to see.

Marx disagreed with Proudhon on the very point on which Bernstein said there was agreement.

Marx agreed with Proudhon on the necessity of "smashing" the present state machine. Neither the opportunists nor the Kautskyans wish to see this similarity between Marxism and anarchism (both Proudhon and Bakunin) because on this point they have departed from Marxism.

Marx differed both with Proudhon and with Bakunin precisely on the question of federalism (not to mention the dictatorship of the proletariat). Federalism as a principle follows logically from the petty-bourgeois views of anarchism. Marx was a centralist. There is no departure from centralism in his observations just quoted. Only those who are imbued with the petty-bourgeois "superstitious belief" in the state can mistake the abolition of the bourgeois state machine for the abolition of centralism!

But will it not be centralism if the proletariat and poor peasantry take political power into their own hands, organize themselves freely in communes, and *unite* the action of all the communes in striking at capital, in crushing the resistance of the capitalists, and in transferring the ownership of the railways, factories, land and so forth to the *entire* nation, to the whole of society? Will that not be the most consistent democratic centralism? And proletarian centralism at that?

Bernstein simply cannot conceive the possibility of voluntary centralism, of the voluntary amalgamation of the communes into a nation, the voluntary fusion of the proletarian communes for the purpose of destroying bourgeois rule and the bourgeois state machine. Like all philistines, Bernstein can imagine centralism only as something from above, to be imposed and maintained solely by the bureaucracy and the military.

Marx, as though foreseeing the possibility of his ideas being distorted, deliberately emphasized the fact that the charge that the

Commune desired to destroy the unity of the nation, to abolish the central power, was an intentional misstatement. Marx deliberately used the words: "The unity of the nation was . . . to be organized," so as to contrast conscious, democratic proletarian centralism to bourgeois, military, bureaucratic centralism.

But . . . there are none so deaf as those who will not hear. And the very thing the opportunists of present-day Social-Democracy do not want to hear about is the destruction of the state power, the amputation of the parasitic excrescence.

5. ABOLITION OF THE PARASITE STATE

We have already quoted Marx's utterance on this subject, and we must now supplement them.

"It is generally the fate of completely new historical creations," he wrote, "to be mistaken for the counter-part of older and even defunct forms of social life, to which they may bear a certain likeness. Thus, this new Commune, which breaks the modern state power, has been mistaken for a reproduction of the mediaeval Communes . . . for . . . a federation of small states, as dreamt of by Montesquieu and the Girondins . . . for an exaggerated form of the ancient struggle against over-centralization. . . . The Communal Constitution would have restored to the social body all the forces hitherto absorbed by the state parasite feeding upon and clogging the free movement of society. By this one act it would have initiated the regeneration of France. . . . The Communal Constitution brought the rural producers under the intellectual lead of the central towns of their districts, and there secured to them, in the working men, the natural trustees of their interests. The very existence of the Commune involved, as a matter of course, local municipal liberty, but no longer as a check upon the now superseded state power."

"Destruction of the state power," which was a "parasitic excrescence"; the "amputation" and "smashing" of "the now superseded state power"—these are the expressions Marx used of the state in appraising and analysing the experience of the Commune.

All this was written a little less than half a century ago; and now one has to make excavations, as it were, to bring undistorted Marxism to the knowledge of the masses. The conclusions drawn from the observation of the last great revolution which Marx lived through were forgotten just at the moment when the time for the next great proletarian revolutions had arrived.

"The multiplicity of interpretations to which the Commune has been subjected, and the multiplicity of interests which construed it in their favour, show that it was a thoroughly expansive political form, while all previous forms of government had been emphatically repressive. Its true secret was this. It was essentially a *working-class government*, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of labour.

"Except on this last condition, the Communal Constitution would have been an impossibility and a delusion."

The utopians busied themselves with "discovering" political forms under which the Socialist transformation of society was to take place. The anarchists waived the question of political forms altogether. The opportunists of present-day Social-Democracy accepted the bourgeois political forms of the parliamentary democratic state as the unsurpassable limit; they battered their foreheads praying before this "idol" and denounced every attempt to *smash* these forms as anarchism.

Marx deduced from the whole history of Socialism and of the political struggle that the state was bound to disappear, and that the transitional form of its disappearance (the transition from state to no state) would be the "proletariat organized as the ruling class." But Marx did not set out to *discover* the political *forms* of this future stage. He limited himself to a precise observation of French history, to analysing it, and to the conclusion to which the year 1851 had led, *viz.*, that matters were moving towards the *smashing* of the bourgeois state machine.

And when the mass revolutionary movement of the proletariat burst forth, Marx in spite of the failure of that movement, in spite of its short life and its patent weakness, began to study the political forms it had *discovered*.

The Commune is the form "at last discovered" by the proletarian revolution, under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour.

The Commune is the first attempt of a proletarian revolution to *smash* the bourgeois state machine and constitutes the political form "at last discovered" which can and must *supersede* the smashed machine.

We shall see below that the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, in different circumstances and under different conditions, continue the work of the Commune and corroborate Marx's brilliant historical analysis.

CHAPTER IV

CONTINUATION. SUPPLEMENTARY EXPLANATIONS BY ENGELS

MARX CAVE the fundamentals on the question of the significance of the experience of the Commune. Engels returned to the same subject repeatedly and explained Marx's analysis and conclusions, sometimes illuminating other sides of the question with such power and vividness that it is necessary to deal with his explanations separately.

1. "THE HOUSING QUESTION"

In his work, *The Housing Question* (1872), Engels took into account the experience of the Commune, and dealt several times with the tasks of the revolution in relation to the state. It is interesting to note that the treatment of this concrete subject revealed, on the one hand, points of similarity between the proletarian state and the present state—features which give grounds for speaking of the state in both cases—and, on the other hand, features which differentiate them, or the transition to the abolition of the state.

"How is the housing question to be solved then? In present-day society, just as any other social question is solved: by the gradual economic adjustment of supply and demand, a solution which ever reproduces the question itself anew and therefore is no solution. How a social revolution would solve this

question depends not only on the circumstances which would exist in each case, but is also connected with still more far-reaching questions, among which one of the most fundamental is the abolition of the antithesis between town and country. As it is not our task to create utopian systems for the arrangement of the future society, it would be more than idle to go into the question here. But one thing is certain: there are already in existence sufficient buildings for dwellings in the big towns to remedy immediately any real 'housing *shortage*,' given rational utilization of them. This can naturally only take place by the expropriation of the present owners and by quartering in their houses the homeless or those workers excessively overcrowded in their former houses. Immediately the proletariat has conquered political power such a measure dictated in the public interests will be just as easy to carry out as other expropriations and billetings are by the existing state." (P. 22 of the German edition of 1887.)

The change in the form of the state power is not discussed here, but only the content of its activity. Expropriations and occupation of houses take place by order even of the present state. From the formal point of view the proletarian state will also "order" the occupation of houses and expropriation of buildings. But it is clear that the old executive apparatus, the bureaucracy, which is connected with the bourgeoisie, would simply be unfit to carry out the orders of the proletarian state.

"... For the rest it must be pointed out that the 'actual seizure' of all instruments of labour, the seizure of industry as a whole by the working people, is the exact contrary of the Proudhonist theory of 'gradual redemption.' Under the latter,

the *individual worker* becomes the owner of the dwelling, the peasant farm, the instruments of labour; under the former, the 'working people' remain the collective owners of the houses, factories and instruments of labour, and would hardly permit their use, at least in a transitional period, by individuals or associations without compensation for the cost, just as the abolition of property in land is not the abolition of ground rent, but its transfer, although in a modified form, to society. The actual seizure of all the instruments of labour by the working people therefore does not at all exclude the retention of the rent relations." (P. 69.)

We shall discuss the question touched upon in this passage, namely, the economic reasons for the withering away of the state, in the next chapter. Engels expresses himself most cautiously, saying that the proletarian state would "hardly" permit, "at least in a transitional period," the use of houses without compensation for the cost. The letting of houses that belong to the whole people, to separate families presupposes the collection of rent, a certain amount of control, and a certain standard of allotment of houses. All this calls for a certain form of state, but it does not call for a special military and bureaucratic apparatus, with officials occupying especially privileged positions. The transition to a state of affairs when it will be possible to supply dwellings rent-free is bound up with the complete "withering away" of the state.

Speaking of the conversion of the Blanquists* to the principles

* *Blanquists*—the followers of the well-known French revolutionary August Blanqui (1805-1881). The Blanquists, as Lenin put it, expected "that mankind would be freed from wage-slavery not by means of the proletarian class struggle, but by means of a conspiracy hatched by a small minority of intellectuals." The Blanquists played a prominent part in the Paris Commune of 1871. In 1901 they joined the Socialist Party of France founded by Jules Guesde.—*Ed.*

of Marxism after the Commune and as a result of its experience, Engels, in passing, formulates these principles as follows:

“... Necessity of political action of the proletariat and of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the transitional stage to the abolition of classes and with them of the state...” (P. 55.)

Addicts to hair-splitting criticism, and bourgeois “exterminators of Marxism,” will perhaps see a contradiction between this *recognition* of the “abolition of the state” and the repudiation of this formula as an anarchist one in the previously-quoted passage from *Anti-Dühring*. It would not be surprising if the opportunists stamped Engels, too, as an “anarchist,” for the habit of accusing the internationalists of anarchism is becoming more and more widespread among the social-chauvinists.

Marxism has always taught that the state will be abolished with the abolition of classes. The well-known passage on the “withering away of the state” in *Anti-Dühring* does not blame the anarchists simply for being in favour of the abolition of the state, but for preaching that the state can be abolished “overnight.”

In view of the fact that the now prevailing “Social-Democratic” doctrine completely distorts the relation of Marxism to anarchism on the question of the abolition of the state, it will be very useful to recall a certain controversy conducted by Marx and Engels with the anarchists.

2. CONTROVERSY WITH THE ANARCHISTS

This controversy took place in 1873. Marx and Engels contributed articles against the Proudhonists, “autonomists” or “anti-authoritarians,” to an Italian Socialist annual, and it was not until 1913 that these articles appeared in German in *Neue Zeit*.

"If the political struggle of the working class assumes violent forms," Marx wrote, ridiculing the anarchists and their repudiation of politics, "if the workers set up their revolutionary dictatorship in place of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, they commit the terrible crime of violating principles, for in order to satisfy their wretched, vulgar, everyday needs, in order to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie, instead of laying down their arms and abolishing the state, they give the state a revolutionary and transitory form. . . ." (*Neue Zeit*, Vol. XXXII, 1, 1913-14, p. 40.)

It was exclusively against this kind of "abolition" of the state that Marx fought in refuting the anarchists! He did not combat the theory that the state would disappear when classes disappeared, or that it would be abolished when classes were abolished; he opposed the proposition that the workers should renounce the use of arms, of organized force, *that is, the state*, which was to serve to "crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie."

To prevent the true meaning of his struggle against anarchism from being distorted, Marx deliberately emphasized the "revolutionary and *transitory* form" of the state which the proletariat needs. The proletariat needs the state only temporarily. We do not at all disagree with the anarchists on the question of the abolition of the state as an *aim*. We maintain that, to achieve this aim, we must temporarily make use of the instruments, resources and methods of the state power *against* the exploiters, just as the dictatorship of the oppressed class is temporarily necessary for the abolition of classes. Marx chooses the sharpest and clearest way of stating his position against the anarchists: after overthrowing the yoke of the capitalists, should the workers "lay down their arms," or use them against the capitalists in order to crush their resistance? But what is the systematic use of arms by one class against the other, if not a "transitory form" of state?

Let every Social-Democrat ask himself: is *that* the way he has been putting the question of the state in controversy with the anarchists? Is *that* the way the vast majority of the official Socialist parties of the Second International have been putting it?

Engels enlarges on the same ideas in even greater detail and more popularly. First of all he ridicules the muddled ideas of the Proudhonites, who called themselves "anti-authoritarians," *i.e.*, repudiated every sort of authority, every sort of subordination, every sort of power. Take a factory, a railway, a ship on the high seas, said Engels—is it not clear that not one of these complex technical units, based on the employment of machinery and the ordered co-operation of many people, could function without a certain amount of subordination and, consequently, without a certain amount of authority or power?

"When I put these arguments up against the most rabid anti-authoritarians," writes Engels, "they were only able to give me the following answer: 'Ah! that is true, but here it is not a case of authority which we confer on delegates, *but of a commission!*' These gentlemen think that they have changed the thing by changing its name. . . ."

Having thus shown that authority and autonomy are relative terms, that the sphere of their application varies with the various phases of social development, that it is absurd to take them as absolute, and adding that the sphere of the application of machinery and large-scale production is constantly becoming enlarged, Engels passes from the general discussion of authority to the question of the state:

"... If the autonomists," he wrote, "would confine themselves to saying that the social organization of the future will restrict authority to the limits in which the relations of production make it inevitable, we could understand each other,

but they are blind to all facts which make the thing necessary, and they hurl themselves against the word.

"Why don't the anti-authoritarians confine themselves to crying out against political authority, against the state? All Socialists are agreed that the state, and with it political authority, will disappear as the result of the coming social revolution, *i.e.*, that public functions will lose their political character and be transformed into the simple administrative functions of watching over real social interests. But the anti-authoritarians demand that the political state should be abolished at once, even before the social conditions which brought it into being have been abolished. They demand that the first act of the social revolution shall be the abolition of authority.

"Have these gentlemen ever seen a revolution? A revolution is undoubtedly the most authoritarian thing there is, an act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon, all very authoritarian means; and the victorious party must maintain its rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries. Would the Paris Commune have lasted a single day if it had not made use of the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie? Should we not, on the contrary, reproach it for having made too little use of this authority? Therefore either one of two things: either the anti-authoritarians don't know what they are talking about, in which case they are sowing nothing but confusion; or they do know, and in that case they are betraying the cause of the proletariat. In either case they serve the reaction." (P. 39.)

This argument touches upon questions which must be examined in connection with the relation between politics and economics during the "withering away" of the state (this is dealt with in the

next chapter). These questions are: the transformation of public functions from political functions into simple functions of administration, and the "political state." This last term, one particularly liable to cause misunderstanding, indicates the process of the withering away of the state: at a certain stage of its withering away the moribund state can be called a non-political state.

Again, the most remarkable thing in this passage from Engels is the way he states the case against the anarchists. Social-Democrats, the would-be disciples of Engels, have discussed this question with the anarchists millions of times since 1873, but they have *not* discussed it as Marxists can and should. The anarchist idea of the abolition of the state is muddled and *non-revolutionary*—that is how Engels put it. It is precisely the revolution in its rise and development, with its specific tasks in relation to violence, authority, power, the state. that the anarchists do not wish to see.

This usual criticism of anarchism by present-day Social-Democrats has been reduced to the purest philistine banality: "We recognize the state, whereas the anarchists do not!" Naturally, such banality cannot but repel revolutionary workers who think at all. Engels says something different. He emphasizes the fact that all Socialists admit that the state will disappear as a result of the Socialist revolution. He then deals with the concrete question of the revolution—the very question which, as a rule, the Social-Democrats, because of their opportunism, evade, and leave, so to speak, exclusively for the anarchists "to work out." And in dealing with this question, Engels takes the bull by the horns; he asks: should not the Commune have made *more* use of the *revolutionary* power of the *state*, that is, of the armed proletariat organized as the ruling class?

Prevailing official Social-Democracy usually dismissed the question of the concrete tasks of the proletariat in the revolution either with a philistine sneer, or, at best, with the sophistic evasion:

"wait and see." And the anarchists were thus justified in saying about such Social-Democracy that it had betrayed its task of educating the working class for the revolution. Engels utilizes the experience of the last proletarian revolution precisely for the purpose of making a very concrete study of what the proletariat should do in relation to the banks and the state, and how it should do it.

3 LETTER TO BEBEL

One of the most, if not the most, remarkable observations on the state in the works of Marx and Engels is contained in the following passage in Engels' letter to Bebel dated March 18-28, 1875. This letter, we may observe in passing, was, as far as we know, first published by Bebel in the second volume of his memoirs (*Aus meinem Leben*), which appeared in 1911, i.e., thirty-six years after it had been written and mailed.

Engels wrote to Bebel criticizing the very draft of the Gotha Program which Marx also criticized in his famous letter to Bläcke. Referring particularly to the question of the state, Engels said:

"...The free people's state is transformed into the free state. Taken in its grammatical sense a free state is one where the state is free in relation to its citizens and is therefore a state with a despotic government. The whole talk about the state should be dropped, especially since the Commune, which was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word. The 'people's state' has been thrown in our faces by the anarchists too long, although Marx's book against Proudhon and later *The Communist Manifesto* directly declare that with the introduction of the Socialist order of society the state will dissolve of itself [*sich auflöst*] and disappear. As, therefore, the state is only a transitional institution which is used in the

struggle, in the revolution, in order to hold down one's adversaries by force, it is pure nonsense to talk of a free people's state; so long as the proletariat still *uses* the state, it does not use it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist. We would therefore propose to replace the word 'state' everywhere by the word *Gemeinwesen* [community], a good old German word which can very well represent the French word *commune*." (P. 322 of the German original.)

It must be borne in mind that this letter refers to the party program which Marx criticized in a letter dated only a few weeks later than the above (Marx's letter is dated May 5, 1875, and that at the time Engels was living with Marx in London. Consequently, when he says "we" in the last sentence, Engels undoubtedly, in his own as well as in Marx's name, suggests to the leader of the German workers' party that the word "state" be *struck out of the program* and replaced by the word "*community*."

What a howl about "anarchism" would be raised by the leaders of present-day "Marxism," which has been faked for the convenience of the opportunists, if such a rectification of the program were suggested to them!

Let them howl. The bourgeoisie will praise them for it.

But we shall go on with our work. In revising the program of our Party we must unfailingly take the advice of Engels and Marx into consideration in order to come nearer the truth, to restore Marxism by purging it of distortions, to guide the struggle of the working class for its emancipation more correctly. Certainly no objections to the advice of Engels and Marx will be found among the Bolsheviks. The only difficulty that may, perhaps, arise will be in regard to terminology. In German there are two words meaning

"community," of which Engels used the one which does not denote a single community, but a totality, a system of communities. In Russian there is no such word, and perhaps we may have to decide to use the French word "commune," although this also has its drawbacks.

"The Commune was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word"—this is the highly important theoretical statement Engels makes. After what has been said above, this statement is perfectly clear. The Commune *was ceasing* to be a state in so far as it had to repress, not the majority of the population, but a minority (the exploiters); it had smashed the bourgeois state machine; in place of a *special* repressive force, the whole population itself came on the scene. All this was a departure from the state in the proper sense of the word. And had the Commune lasted, all traces of the state in it would have "withered away" of themselves; it would not have been necessary for it to "abolish" the institutions of the state; they would have ceased to function in the measure that they ceased to have anything to do.

"The people's state has been thrown in our faces by the anarchists." In saying this, Engels had Bakunin and his attacks on the German Social-Democrats particularly in mind. Engels admitted that these attacks were justified *in so far* as the "people's state" was as much an absurdity and as much a departure from Socialism as the "free people's state." Engels tried to put the struggle of the German Social-Democrats against the anarchists on right lines, to make this struggle correct in principle, to purge it of opportunist prejudices concerning the "state." Alas! Engels' letter was pigeon-holed for thirty-six years. We shall see below that, even after Engels' letter was published, Kautsky obstinately repeated what in essence were the very mistakes against which Engels had uttered his warning.

Bebel replied to Engels in a letter, dated September 21, 1875,

in which he wrote *inter alia*, that he "fully agrees" with Engels' criticism of the draft program, and that he had reproached Liebknecht for his readiness to make concessions (p. 304 of the German edition of Bebel's *Memoirs*, Vol. II). But if we take Bebel's pamphlet, *Our Aims*, we find there arguments on the state that are absolutely wrong.

"The state must be transformed from one based on class rule into a people's state." (German edition. *Unsere Ziele*, 1886, p. 14.)

This is printed in the *ninth* (the ninth!) edition of Bebel's pamphlet! It is not surprising that such persistently repeated opportunist views on the state were absorbed by German Social-Democracy, especially as Engels' revolutionary interpretations had been safely pigeonholed, and all the conditions of life were such as to "wean" the people from revolution for a long time!

4. CRITICISM OF THE DRAFT OF THE ERFURT PROGRAM*

In examining the Marxian doctrine of the state, the criticism of the draft of the Erfurt Program sent by Engels to Kautsky on June 29, 1891, a criticism published only ten years later in *Neue Zeit*, cannot be ignored; for this criticism is mainly concerned with the *opportunist* views of Social-Democracy on questions of *state* structure.

We shall note in passing that Engels also makes an exceedingly valuable observation on questions of economics, which shows how attentively and thoughtfully he watched the changes in modern capitalism, and how he was able to foresee to a certain extent the

* *Erfurt Program*—the program adopted at the Erfurt Congress of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany in 1891.—*Ed.*

tasks of our own, the imperialist, epoch. Here is the passage: referring to the word "planlessness" (*Planlosigkeit*) used in the draft program as characteristic of capitalism, Engels writes:

"When we pass from joint-stock companies to trusts which control and monopolize whole branches of industry, it is not only private production that ceases, but also planlessness" (*Neue Zeit*, Vol. XX, 1, 1901-02, p. 8).

Here we have what is most essential in the theoretical appraisal of the latest phase of capitalism, *i.e.*, imperialism, *viz.*, that capitalism becomes monopoly *capitalism*. The latter must be emphasized because the erroneous bourgeois reformist assertion that monopoly capitalism or state monopoly capitalism is *no longer* capitalism, but can already be termed "state Socialism," or something of that sort, is very widespread. The trusts, of course, have not created, do not create now, and cannot create full and complete planning. But to whatever extent they *do plan*, to whatever extent the capitalist magnates calculate in advance the volume of production on a national and even on an international scale, and to whatever extent they systematically regulate it, we still remain *under capitalism*—capitalism in its new stage, it is true, but still, undoubtedly, capitalism. The "proximity," of *such* capitalism to Socialism should serve the genuine representatives of the proletariat as proof of the proximity, ease, feasibility and urgency of the Socialist revolution, and not as an argument in favour of tolerating the repudiation of such a revolution or in favour of making capitalism look more attractive, an occupation in which all the reformists are engaged.

But let us return to the question of the state. In this letter Engels makes three valuable suggestions: first, as regards the republic; second, as regards the connection between the national question and the form of state, and, third, as regards local self-government.

As regards the republic, Engels made this the centre of gravity of his criticism of the draft of the Erfurt Program. And when we remember what importance the Erfurt Program has acquired in the whole of international Social-Democracy, that it has become the model for the whole of the Second International, it may be said without exaggeration that Engels thereby criticized the opportunism of the whole Second International.

"The political demands of the draft," Engels writes, "have one great fault. What actually ought to be said is *not there*. . . ." (Engels' italics.)

And, later on, he makes it clear that the German constitution is but a copy of the very reactionary constitution of 1850; that the Reichstag is only, as Wilhelm Liebknecht put it, "the fig-leaf of absolutism"; and that to wish "to transform all the instruments of labour into public property" on the basis of a constitution which legalizes the existence of petty states and the federation of petty German states is an "obvious absurdity."

"To touch on that is dangerous, however," Engels adds, knowing full well that it is impossible, for reasons of legality, to include in the program the demand for a republic in Germany. But Engels does not rest content with this obvious argument which satisfied "everybody." He continues:

"And yet somehow or other the thing has got to be attacked. How necessary this is is shown precisely at the present time by the inroads which opportunism is making in a great section of the Social-Democratic press. For fear of a revival of the anti-Socialist Law and from recollection of all manner of premature utterances which were let fall during the reign of that law the present legal position of the Party in Germany is now all of a sudden to be treated as sufficient for the carrying out of all the demands of the Party by peaceful means."

Engels particularly stresses the fundamental fact that the German Social-Democrats were prompted by fear of a revival of the Anti-Socialist Law,* and unhesitatingly calls this opportunism; he declares that precisely because there was no republic and no freedom in Germany, the dreams of a "peaceful" path were absolutely absurd. Engels is sufficiently careful not to tie his hands. He admits that in republican or very free countries "one can conceive" (only "conceive!") of a peaceful development towards Socialism. but in Germany, he repeats,

"in Germany where the government is almost almighty and the Reichstag and all other representative bodies have no real power, to proclaim such a thing in Germany—and moreover when there is no need to do so—is to remove the fig-leaf from absolutism, and become oneself a screen for its nakedness."

The great majority of the official leaders of the German Social-Democratic Party, who pigeonholed this advice, have indeed proved to be a screen for absolutism.

"Ultimately such a policy can only lead one's own party astray. General abstract political questions have been put into the foreground, concealing thus the immediate concrete questions, the questions which at the first great events, the first political crisis, put themselves on the agenda. What can result from this except that at the decisive moment the Party is suddenly left without guidance, that unclarity and disunity reign on the most decisive points because these points have never been discussed?...

"This forgetfulness of the great main standpoint in the momentary interests of the day, this struggling and striving for

* *Anti-Socialist Law*—the law introduced by Bismarck in 1878, the express purpose of which was to suppress the Social-Democratic movement in Germany. It was repealed in 1890 after a long struggle.—*Ed.*

the success of the moment without consideration for the later consequences, this sacrifice of the future of the movement for its present may be 'honestly' meant, but it is and remains opportunism, and 'honest' opportunism is perhaps the most dangerous of all.

"If one thing is certain it is that our Party and the working class can only come to power under the form of the democratic republic. This is even the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat as the Great French Revolution has already shown..."

Engels repeats here in a particularly striking manner the fundamental idea which runs like a red thread through all of Marx's works, namely, that the democratic republic is the nearest approach to the dictatorship of the proletariat. For such a republic—without in the least abolishing the domination of capital, and, therefore, the oppression of the masses and the class struggle—inevitably leads to such an extension, development, unfolding and intensification of that struggle that, as soon as the possibility arises of satisfying the fundamental interests of the oppressed masses, this possibility is achieved inevitably and solely in the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the leadership of those masses by the proletariat. These, too, are "forgotten words" of Marxism for the whole of the Second International, and this forgetfulness was demonstrated with particular vividness by the history of the Menshevik Party in the first half year of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

On the question of a federal republic, in connection with the national composition of the population, Engels wrote:

"What should take the place of present-day Germany?" (with its reactionary monarchical constitution and its equally reactionary division into petty states, which perpetuates all the specific features of "Prussianism" instead of dissolving them

in Germany as a whole.) "In my view, the proletariat can only use the form of the one and indivisible republic. In the gigantic territory of the United States a federal republic is still, on the whole, a necessity, although in the Eastern states it is already becoming a hindrance. It would be a step forward in England, where the two islands are peopled by four nations and in spite of a single Parliament three different systems of legislation exist side by side even today. In little Switzerland, it has long been a hindrance, tolerable only because Switzerland is content to be a purely passive member of the European state system. For Germany, federation of the Swiss type would be an enormous step backward. Two points distinguish a federal state from a unitary state: first, that each separate federated state, each canton, has its own civil and criminal legislative and judicial system, and, second, that alongside of a popular chamber there is also a federal chamber in which each canton, large or small, votes as such."

In Germany the federal state is the transitional stage to the complete unitary state, and the "revolution from above" of 1866 and 1870* must not be reversed but supplemented by a "movement from below."

Engels did not display indifference to the question of the forms of state; on the contrary, he tried to analyse the transitional forms with the utmost care in order to establish, in accordance with the concrete, historical, specific features of each separate case, *from what and into what* the given transitional form is evolving.

* Engels refers here to the reunion of the dismembered German state into a single state which was being carried out by the ruling clique of Prussia "from above," by military force. Prussia's war against Austria in 1866 led to the formation of the North-German Confederation of German states: the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 resulted in the founding of the German empire headed by Prussia.—*Ed.*

From the point of view of the proletariat and the proletarian revolution Engels, like Marx, insisted on democratic centralism, on one indivisible republic. He regarded the federal republic either as an exception and a hindrance to development, or as a transitional form from a monarchy to a centralized republic, as a "step forward" under certain special conditions. And in these special conditions, the national question comes to the front.

In spite of their ruthless criticism of the reactionary nature of small states, and, in certain concrete cases, the screening of this by the national question, Engels and Marx never betrayed a trace of a desire to evade the national question—a desire of which the Dutch and Polish Marxists are often guilty, as a result of their very justifiable opposition to the narrow philistine nationalism of "their" little states.

Even in regard to England, where geographical conditions, a common language and the history of many centuries would seem to have "put an end" to the national question in the separate small divisions of England—even in regard to this country, Engels took into account the patent fact that the national question had not yet been settled, and recognized in consequence that the establishment of a federal republic would be a "step forward." Of course, there is not a trace here of an attempt to abandon the criticism of the defects of a federal republic of the most determined propaganda and struggle for a united and centralized democratic republic.

But Engels did not interpret democratic centralism in the bureaucratic sense in which this term is used by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologists, including the anarchists. His interpretation did not in the least preclude such wide local self-government as would combine the voluntary defence of the unity of the state by the "communes" and districts with the complete abolition of all bureaucracy and all "ordering" from above. Enlarging on the program views of Marxism on the state, Engels wrote:

"So, then, a unitary republic—but not in the sense of the present French Republic, which is nothing but the Empire established in 1798 minus the Emperor. From 1792 to 1798 each Department of France, each commune (*Gemeinde*) enjoyed complete self-government on the American model, and this is what we too must have. How self-government is to be organized and how we can manage without a bureaucracy has been shown by America and the first French Republic, and is being shown even today by Canada, Australia and the other English colonies. And a provincial and local self-government of this type is far freer than Swiss federalism under which, it is true, the canton is very independent in relation to the *Bund*" (i.e., the federated state as a whole), "but is also independent in relation to the district and the commune. The cantonal governments appoint the district governors (*Bezirksstatthalter*) and prefects—a feature which is unknown in English-speaking countries and which we shall have to abolish here in the future along with the Prussian *Landräte* and *Regierungsräte* (commissaries, district police chiefs, governors, and in general all officials appointed from above).

Accordingly, Engels proposes the following wording for the clause in the program on self-government:

"Complete self-government for the provinces" (districts and communities) "through officials elected by universal suffrage. The abolition of all local and provincial authorities appointed by the state."

I have already had occasion to point out—in *Pravda** (No. 68, May 28, 1917), which was suppressed by the government of

* *Pravda* (*Truth*)—a legal daily Bolshevik newspaper, began publication in St. Petersburg on April 22 (May 5), 1912. It was organized and directed by Lenin and Stalin. The newspaper was subjected to constant

Kerensky and other "Socialist" Ministers**—how in this connection (of course, not only in this connection by any means) our alleged Socialist representatives of alleged-revolutionary alleged-democracy have departed *from democracy* in the most scandalous manner. Naturally, people who have bound themselves by a "coalition" with the imperialist bourgeoisie have remained deaf to this criticism.

It is extremely important to note that Engels, armed with facts, disproves by a precise example the prejudice that is very widespread, particularly among petty-bourgeois democrats, that a federal republic necessarily means a greater amount of freedom than a centralized republic. This is not true. It is disproved by the facts cited by Engels regarding the centralized French Republic of 1792-98 and the federal Swiss Republic. The really democratic centralized republic gave *more* freedom than the federal republic. In other words, the *greatest* amount of local, provincial and other freedom known in history was granted by a *centralized* and not by a federal republic.

Insufficient attention has been and is being paid to this fact in our Party propaganda and agitation, as, indeed, to the whole question of federal and centralized republics and local self-government.

persecution by the government and was repeatedly suppressed, reappearing under different names, as for example: *Rabochaya Pravda* (*Workers' Truth*), *Proletarskaya Pravda* (*Proletarian Truth*), etc. It was suppressed by the government in July 1914, on the eve of the first world war, and resumed publication, as the Central Organ of the Bolsheviks, only after the overthrow of tsarism in March 1917. In July 1917 it was published semi-legally and came out under different names. It began to come out again under its old name on November 7, 1917. In March 1918 the editorial offices were transferred to Moscow, and since that time it has appeared as the organ of the Central Committee and Moscow Committee of the C.P.S.U.(B).—*Ed.*

** See "A Question of Principle. 'Forgotten Words' of Democracy" in Lenin, *Collected Works*, Eng. ed., Vol. XX, Book II.—*Ed.*

5. THE 1891 INTRODUCTION TO MARX'S "THE CIVIL WAR IN FRANCE"

In his Introduction to the third edition of *The Civil War in France* (this Introduction is dated March 18, 1891, and was originally published in the *Neue Zeit*), Engels, in addition to many other interesting incidental remarks on questions connected with the attitude towards the state, gives a remarkably striking résumé of the lessons of the Commune. This résumé, which was rendered more profound by the entire experience of the twenty years that separated the author from the Commune, and which was directed particularly against the "superstitious belief in the state" so widespread in Germany, may justly be called the *last word* of Marxism on the question dealt with here.

In France, Engels observes, the workers were armed after every revolution:

"...therefore the disarming of the workers was the first commandment of the bourgeois at the helm of the state. Hence, after every revolution won by the workers, a new struggle, ending with the defeat of the workers."

This résumé of the experience of bourgeois revolutions is as concise as it is expressive. The essence of the matter—also, by the way, of the question of the state (*has the oppressed class arms?*)—is here remarkably well defined. It is precisely this essential thing which is most often ignored by professors, who are influenced by bourgeois ideology, as well as by petty-bourgeois democrats. In the Russian Revolution of 1917, the honour (Cavaignac honour*) of babbling this secret of bourgeois revolution fell

* *Cavaignac* (1802-1857)—a French general who suppressed the insurrection of the Paris workers in June 1848 with incredible ferocity.—Ed.

to the Menshevik, "also-Marxist," Tsereteli. In his "historic" speech of June 9, Tsereteli blurted out the determination of the bourgeoisie to disarm the Petrograd workers—referring, of course, to this decision as his own, and as a vital necessity for the "state"!

Tsereteli's historic speech of June 9, will, of course, serve every historian of the Revolution of 1917 as one of the most striking illustrations of how the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik bloc, led by Mr. Tsereteli, deserted to the side of the bourgeoisie *against* the revolutionary proletariat.

Another incidental remark of Engels', also connected with the question of the state, deals with religion. It is well known that German Social-Democracy, as it decayed and became more and more opportunist, slipped more and more frequently into the philistine misinterpretation of the celebrated formula: "Religion is a private matter." That is, this formula was twisted to mean that religion was a private matter *even for the party* of the revolutionary proletariat!! It was against this utter betrayal of the revolutionary program of the proletariat that Engels protested. In 1891 he saw only the *very feeble* beginnings of opportunism in his party. and therefore. he expressed himself on the subject very cautiously:

"... As almost without exception workers or recognized representatives of the workers, sat in the Commune, its decisions bore a decidedly proletarian character. Either they decreed reforms which the republican bourgeoisie had failed to pass solely out of cowardice, but which provided a necessary basis for the free activity of the working class—such as the realization of the principle that *in relation to the state*, religion is purely a private matter—or they promulgated decrees which were in the direct interests of the working class and to some extent cut deeply into the old order of society."

Engels deliberately emphasized the words "in relation to the state," as a straight thrust at the German opportunism, which had declared religion to be a private matter *in relation to the Party*, thus degrading the party of the revolutionary proletariat to the level of the most vulgar "free-thinking" philistinism, which is prepared to allow a non-denominational status, but which renounces the *Party* struggle against the religious opium which stupefies the people.

The future historian of German Social-Democracy, in investigating the basic causes of its shameful collapse in 1914, will find no lack of interesting material on this question, from the evasive declarations in the articles of the ideological leader of the party, Kautsky, which open wide the door to opportunism, to the attitude of the Party towards the *Los-von-Kirche-Bewegung* (the "leave the church" movement) in 1913.

But let us see how, twenty years after the Commune, Engels summed up its lessons for the fighting proletariat.

Here are the lessons to which Engels attached prime importance:

"... It was precisely the oppressing power of the former centralized government, army, political police and bureaucracy, which Napoleon had created in 1798 and since then had been taken over by every new government as a welcome instrument and used against its opponents, it was precisely this power which was to fall everywhere, just as it had already fallen in Paris.

"From the outset the Commune was compelled to recognize that the working class, once come to power, could not manage with the old state machine; that in order not to lose again its only just conquered supremacy, this working class must, on the one hand, do away with all the old repressive machinery previously used against it itself, and, on the other, safeguard itself against its own deputies and officials, by

declaring them all, without exception, subject to recall at any moment. . . ."

Engels emphasizes again and again that the state remains a state, *i.e.*, it retains its fundamental characteristic feature of transforming the officials, the "servants of society," its organs, into the *masters* of society not only under a monarchy, but *also in a democratic republic*. . .

"Against this transformation of the state and the organs of the state from servants of society into masters of society—an inevitable transformation in all previous states—the Commune made use of two infallible expedients. In the first place, it filled all posts—administrative, judicial and educational—by election on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned, with the right of the same electors to recall their delegate at any time. And, in the second place, all officials, high or low, were paid only the wages received by other workers. The highest salary paid by the Commune to anyone was 6,000 francs.*

"In this way, an effective barrier to place hunting and careerism was set up, even apart from the binding mandates** to delegates to representative bodies which were also added in profusion. . . ."

Engels here approaches the interesting boundary line at which consistent democracy is *transformed* into Socialism and at which

* Nominally about 2,400 rubles; according to the present rate of exchange about 6,000 rubles. Those Bolsheviks who propose that a salary of 9,000 rubles be paid to members of municipal councils, for instance, instead of a maximum salary of 6,000 rubles—quite an adequate sum—for the whole state are committing an unpardonable error.

** *Imperative mandates*. *i.e.*, binding instructions given to a member of parliament by his constituents as to his line of conduct in parliament. Failure to carry out these instructions entails the member's recall.—*Ed.*

it *demand*s Socialism. For, in order to abolish the state, the functions of the civil service must be converted into the simple operations of control and accounting that can be performed by the vast majority of the population, and, ultimately, by every single individual. And in order to abolish careerism completely it must be made *impossible* for "honourable" though unremunerated posts in the public service to be used as a springboard to highly remunerative posts in banks or joint-stock companies, as *constantly* happens in all the freest capitalist countries.

But Engels did not make the mistake some Marxists make in dealing, for example, with the right of nations to self-determination, when they argue that this is impossible under capitalism and will be unnecessary under Socialism. Such a seemingly clever but really incorrect statement might be made in regard to *any* democratic institution, including moderate salaries for officials; because fully consistent democracy is impossible under capitalism, and under Socialism all democracy *wITHERS AWAY*.

It is a sophistry that is similar to the old humorous problem: will a man become bald if he loses one more hair?

To develop democracy *to its logical conclusion*, to find the *forms* for this development, to test them *by practice*, and so forth—all this is one of the constituent tasks of the struggle for the social revolution. Taken separately, no sort of democracy will bring Socialism. But in actual life democracy will never be "taken separately"; it will be "taken together" with other things, it will exert its influence on economics, will stimulate *its* transformation; and in its turn it will be influenced by economic development, and so on. Such are the dialectics of living history.

Engels continues:

"This shattering (*Sprengung*) of the former state power and its replacement by a new and really democratic state is

described in detail in the third section of the *Civil War*. But it was necessary to dwell briefly here once more on some of its features, because in Germany particularly the superstitious belief in the state has been carried over from philosophy into the general consciousness of the bourgeoisie and even of many workers. According to the philosophical notion, the state is the 'realization of the idea,' or the Kingdom of God on earth, translated into philosophical terms, the sphere in which eternal truth and justice is or should be realized. And from this follows a superstitious reverence for the state and everything connected with it, which takes root the more readily as people from their childhood are accustomed to imagine that the affairs and interests common to the whole of society could not be looked after otherwise than as they have been looked after in the past, that is, through the state and its well-paid officials. And people think they have taken quite an extraordinarily bold step forward when they have rid themselves of belief in hereditary monarchy and swear by the democratic republic. In reality, however, the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy; and at best an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victorious struggle for class supremacy, whose worse sides the victorious proletariat, just like the Commune, cannot avoid having to lop off at the earliest possible moment, until such time as a new generation, reared in new and free social conditions, will be able to throw the entire lumber of the state on the scrap-heap."

Engels warned the Germans not to forget the fundamentals of Socialism on the question of the state in general in connection with the substitution of a republic for the monarchy. His warnings now read like a lecture to Messrs. Tsereteli and Chernov, who in their

"coalition" practice revealed a superstitious belief in and a superstitious reverence for the state!

Two more points. First: the fact that Engels said that in a democratic republic, "no less" than in a monarchy, the state remains a "machine for the oppression of one class by another" does not signify that the *form* of oppression is a matter of indifference to the proletariat, as some anarchists "teach." A wider, freer and more open *form* of the class struggle and of class oppression greatly assists the proletariat in its struggle for the abolition of all classes.

Second: why will only a new generation be able to throw the entire lumber of the state on the scrap-heap? This question is bound up with the question of overcoming democracy, with which we shall deal now.

6. ENGELS ON OVERCOMING DEMOCRACY.

Engels had occasion to speak on this subject in connection with the question of the term "Social-Democrat" being *scientifically* wrong.

In a preface to an edition of his articles of the 'seventies on various subjects, mainly on "international" questions (*Internationales aus dem Volksstaat*), dated January 3, 1894, i.e., written a year and a half before his death, Engels wrote that in all his articles he used the word "Communist" *not* "Social-Democrat," because at that time it was the Proudhonites in France and the Lassalleans in Germany who called themselves Social-Democrats.

"For Marx and me it was therefore quite impossible to chose such an elastic term to characterize our special point of view. Today things are different, and the word ["Social-Democrat"] may perhaps pass muster [*mag passieren*], however unsuitable [*unpassend*] it still is for a party whose economic program is not merely Socialist in general, but directly Com-

munist, and whose ultimate political aim is to overcome the whole state and therefore democracy as well. The name of *genuine* [Engels' italics] political parties, however, are never wholly appropriate; the party develops while the name persists."

The dialectician Engels remains true to dialectics to the end of his days. Marx and I, he says, had a splendid, scientifically exact name for the party, but there was no real party, i.e., no proletarian mass party. Now, at the end of the nineteenth century, there is a real party, but its name is scientifically inexact. Never mind, it will "pass muster," if only the party *develops*, if only the scientific inexactness of its name is not hidden from it and does not hinder its development in the right direction!

Perhaps some humourist will begin consoling us Bolsheviks in the manner of Engels: we have a genuine party, it is developing splendidly; even such a meaningless and ugly term as "Bolshevik" will "pass muster," although it expresses nothing but the purely accidental fact that at the Brussels-London Congress of 1903 we were in the majority....* Perhaps now that the persecution of

* The reference here is to the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party which was held in July-August 1903. The congress first met in Brussels, but owing to police persecution it transferred its sittings to London. The Second Congress plays an enormous part in the history of the Party. It was at this congress that the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party was actually formed, it was at this congress that a Party Program and Rules were adopted and the central leading organs of the Party set up. The struggle between the two trends within the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (the revolutionary trend—led by Lenin, and the opportunist led by Martov) developed at the congress mainly around questions of organization and resulted in the Party splitting into two groups: Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. These names are connected with the results of the elections to the central leading organs of the Party. Lenin's followers, who received the majority of votes in the elections at the congress, have since been called Bolsheviks (from *bolshinstvo*, majority), and Lenin's opponents, who received the minority of votes, have since been called Mensheviks (from *menshinstvo*, minority).—Ed.

our Party by republican and "revolutionary" petty-bourgeois democracy in July and August* has made the name "Bolshevik" such a universally respected one; that, in addition, this persecution signalizes the great historical progress our Party has made in its *actual* development, even I would hesitate to insist on the suggestion I made in April to change the name of our Party. Perhaps I would propose a "compromise" to our comrades, *viz.*, to call ourselves the Communist Party, but to retain the word "Bolsheviks" in brackets. . . .

But the question of the name of the Party is incomparably less important than the question of the attitude of the revolutionary proletariat to the state.

In the arguments usually advanced about the state, the mistake is constantly made against which Engels uttered his warning and which we have in passing indicated above, namely, it is constantly forgotten that the abolition of the state means also the abolition of democracy; that the withering away of the state means the withering away of democracy. ???

At first sight this assertion seems exceedingly strange and incomprehensible; indeed, someone may even begin to fear that we are expecting the advent of an order of society in which the principle of the subordination of the minority to the majority will not be respected—for is not democracy the recognition of this principle?

* This refers to the events in Petrograd on July 3-5 [16-18] 1917. During those days huge demonstrations of workers and soldiers took place demanding the transfer of power to the Soviets. Notwithstanding the peaceful character of the demonstrations, the bourgeois Provisional Government, headed by Kerensky, sent troops against the demonstrators. After suppressing the demonstration, the government began to persecute the Bolshevik Party, suppressed *Pravda*, the Central Organ of the Bolsheviks, issued a warrant for the arrest of Lenin, who was obliged to go into hiding, and arrested a number of prominent leaders of the Bolshevik Party. In spite of these conditions, however, the Party succeeded, under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin, in preparing the ground for the victory of the proletarian revolution in October (November) 1917.—Ed.

No, democracy is *not* identical with the subordination of the minority to the majority. Democracy is a *state* which recognizes the subordination of the minority to the majority, *i.e.*, an organization for the systematic use of *violence* by one class against the other, by one section of the population against another.

We set ourselves the ultimate aim of abolishing the state, *i.e.*, all organized and systematic violence, all use of violence against man in general. We do not expect the advent of an order of society in which the principle of the subordination of the minority to the majority will not be observed. But in striving for Socialism we are convinced that it will develop into Communism and, hence, that the need for violence against people in general, the need for the *subjection* of one man to another, and of one section of the population to another, will vanish, since people will *become accustomed* to observing the elementary conditions of social life *without force* and *without subordination*.

In order to emphasize this element of habit, Engels speaks of a new *generation*, "reared in new and free social conditions," which "will be able to throw the entire lumber of the state"—of every kind of state, including even the democratic-republican state—"on the scrap-heap."

In order to explain this it is necessary to examine the question of the economic basis of the withering away of the state.

CHAPTER V

THE ECONOMIC BASIS OF THE WITHERING AWAY OF THE STATE

MARX EXPLAINS this question most thoroughly in his *Critique of the Gotha Program* (letter to Bracke, May 5, 1875, which was not printed until 1891 in *Neue Zeit*, Vol. IX, I, and which has appeared in a special Russian edition). The polemical part of this remarkable work, which consists of a criticism of Lassalleanism, has, so to speak, overshadowed its positive part, namely, the analysis of the connection between the development of Communism and the withering away of the state.

1. MARX'S PRESENTATION OF THE QUESTION

From a superficial comparison of Marx's letter to Bracke of May 5, 1875, with Engels' letter to Bebel of March 28, 1875, which we examined above, it might appear that Marx was much more "pro-state" than Engels, and that the difference of opinion between the two writers on the question of the state was very considerable.

Engels suggested to Bebel that all the chatter about the state be dropped; that the word "state" be eliminated from the program altogether and the word "community" substituted for it. Engels even declared that the Commune was really no longer a state in the proper sense of the word. Yet Marx spoke of the "future state in

Communist society," i.e., as though he recognized the need for a state even under Communism. ✓

But such a view would be fundamentally wrong. A closer examination shows that Marx's and Engels' views on the state and its withering away were completely identical, and that Marx's expression quoted above refers merely to this *withering away* of the state.

Clearly there can be no question of defining the exact moment of the *future* "withering away"—the more so since it must obviously be a rather lengthy process. The apparent difference between Marx and Engels is due to the different subjects they dealt with, the different aims they were pursuing. Engels set out to show Bebel plainly, sharply and in broad outline the absurdity of the prevailing prejudices concerning the state, which were shared to no small degree by Lassalle. Marx only touched upon *this* question in passing, being interested in another subject, viz., the *development* of Communist society.

The whole theory of Marx is an application of the theory of development—in its most consistent, complete, thought-out and replete form—to modern capitalism. Naturally, Marx was faced with the question of applying this theory both to the *forthcoming* collapse of capitalism and to the *future* development of *future* Communism.

On the basis of what *data* can the question of the future development of future Communism be raised?

On the basis of the fact that *it has its origin* in capitalism, that it develops historically from capitalism, that it is the result of the action of a social force to which capitalism *has given birth*. There is no trace of an attempt on Marx's part to conjure up a utopia, to make idle guesses about what cannot be known. Marx treats the question of Communism in the same way as a naturalist would

treat the question of the development, say, of a new biological species, if he knew that such and such was its origin and such and such the direction in which it was changing.

Marx, first of all, brushes aside the confusion the Gotha Program brings into the question of the relation between state and society. He writes:

"Present-day society' is capitalist society, which exists in all civilized countries, more or less free from mediaeval admixture, more or less modified by the special historical development of each country and more or less developed. On the other hand, the 'present-day state' changes with a country's frontier. It is different in the Prusso-German Empire from what it is in Switzerland, it is different in England from what it is in the United States. The 'present-day state' is therefore a fiction.

"Nevertheless, the different states of the different civilized countries, in spite of their manifold diversity of form, all have this in common, that they are based on modern bourgeois society, only one more or less capitalistically developed. They have, therefore, also certain essential features in common. In this sense it is possible to speak of the 'present-day state,' in contrast to the future, in which its present root, bourgeois society, will have died away.

"The question then arises: what transformation will the state undergo in Communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to the present functions of the state? This question can only be answered scientifically and one does not get a flea-hop nearer to the problem by a thousand-fold combination of the word people with the word state...."

Having thus ridiculed all talk about a "people's state," Marx formulates the question and warns us, as it were, that to arrive

at a scientific answer one must rely only on firmly established scientific data.

The first fact that has been established with complete exactitude by the whole theory of development, by science as a whole—a fact which the utopians forgot, and which is forgotten by the present-day opportunists who are afraid of the Socialist revolution—is that, historically, there must undoubtedly be a special stage or a special phase of *transition* from capitalism to Communism.

2. THE TRANSITION FROM CAPITALISM TO COMMUNISM

Marx continues:

“Between capitalist and Communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the *revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*.”

Marx bases this conclusion on an analysis of the role played by the proletariat in modern capitalist society, on the data concerning the development of this society, and on the irreconcilability of the antagonistic interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Earlier the question was put in this way: in order to achieve its emancipation, the proletariat must overthrow the bourgeoisie, conquer political power and establish its revolutionary dictatorship.

Now the question is put somewhat differently: the transition from capitalist society—which is developing towards Communism—to a Communist society is impossible without a “political transition period,” and the state in this period can only be the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

What, then, is the relation of this dictatorship to democracy?

We have seen that *The Communist Manifesto* simply places the two ideas side by side: "to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class" and "to win the battle of democracy." On the basis of all that has been said above, it is possible to determine more precisely how democracy changes in the transition from capitalism to Communism.

In capitalist society, under the conditions most favourable to its development, we have more or less complete democracy in the democratic republic. But this democracy is always restricted by the narrow framework of capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remains, in reality, a democracy for the minority, only for the possessing classes, only for the rich. Freedom in capitalist society always remains about the same as it was in the ancient Greek republics: freedom for the slave-owners. Owing to the conditions of capitalist exploitation the modern wage-slaves are so crushed by want and poverty that "they cannot be bothered with democracy," "they cannot be bothered with politics"; in the ordinary peaceful course of events the majority of the population is debarred from participating in social and political life.

The correctness of this statement is perhaps most clearly proved by Germany. precisely because in that country constitutional legality lasted and remained stable for a remarkably long time—for nearly half a century (1871-1914)—and Social-Democracy during this period was able to achieve far more in Germany than in other countries in the way of "utilizing legality," and was able to organize a larger proportion of the workers into a political party than anywhere else in the world.

What is this largest proportion of politically conscious and active wage-slaves that has so far been observed in capitalist society? One million members of the Social-Democratic Party—out of fifteen million wage workers! Three million organized in trade unions—out of fifteen million! •

Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich—that is the democracy of capitalist society. If we look more closely into the mechanism of capitalist democracy, everywhere, in the “petty”—so-called petty—details of the suffrage (residential qualification, exclusion of women, etc.), in the technique of the representative institutions, in the actual obstacles to the right of assembly (public buildings are not for “beggars”!), in the purely capitalist organization of the daily press, etc., etc.,—we see restriction after restriction upon democracy. These restrictions, exceptions, exclusions, obstacles for the poor, seem slight, especially in the eyes of one who has never known want himself and has never been in close contact with the oppressed classes in their mass life (and nine-tenths if not ninety-nine hundredths, of the bourgeois publicists and politicians are of this category); but in their sum total these restrictions exclude and squeeze out the poor from politics, from taking an active part in democracy.


Marx grasped this *essence* of capitalist democracy splendidly, when, in analysing the experience of the Commune, he said that the oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class should represent and repress them in parliament!

But from this capitalist democracy—inevitably narrow, tacitly repelling the poor, and therefore hypocritical and false to the core—forward development does not proceed simply, directly and smoothly to “greater and greater democracy,” as the liberal professors and petty-bourgeois opportunists would have us believe. No, forward development, *i.e.*, towards Communism, proceeds through the dictatorship of the proletariat, and cannot do otherwise, for the *resistance* of the capitalist exploiters cannot be broken by anyone else or in any other way.

But the dictatorship of the proletariat, *i.e.*, the organization of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purpose

of crushing the oppressors, cannot result merely in an expansion of democracy. *Simultaneously* with an immense expansion of democracy, which *for the first time* becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the rich, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must crush them in order to free humanity from wage-slavery; their resistance must be broken by force; it is clear that where there is suppression, where there is coercion, there is no freedom and no democracy.

Engels expressed this splendidly in his letter to Bebel when he said, as the reader will remember, that ✓

“so long as the proletariat still *uses* the state, it does not use it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist.” 

Democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, *i.e.*, exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and oppressors of the people—this is the change democracy undergoes during the *transition* from capitalism to Communism.

Only in Communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists has been completely broken, when the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no classes (*i.e.*, when there is no difference between the members of society as regards their relation to the social means of production), *only* then does “the state . . . cease to exist,” and it “*becomes possible to speak of freedom.*” Only then will really complete democracy, democracy without any exceptions, be possible and be realized. And only then will democracy begin to *wither away*, owing to the simple fact that freed from capitalist slavery, from the untold horrors, savagery, absurdities and infamies of capitalist exploitation, people will gradually

become accustomed to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copy-book maxims; they will become accustomed to observing them without force, without compulsion, without subordination, *without the special apparatus* for compulsion which is called the state.

The expression "the state *withers away*" is very well chosen, for it indicates both the gradual and the spontaneous nature of the process. Only habit can, and undoubtedly will, have such an effect; for we see around us millions of times how readily people become accustomed to observing the necessary rules of social intercourse if there is no exploitation, if there is nothing that causes indignation, nothing that calls forth protest and revolt or evokes the necessity for *suppression*.

Thus in capitalist society we have a democracy that is curtailed, wretched, false; a democracy only for the rich, for the minority. The dictatorship of the proletariat, the period of transition to Communism, will for the first time create democracy for the people, for the majority, in addition to the necessary suppression of the minority—the exploiters. Communism alone is capable of giving really complete democracy, and the more complete it is the more quickly will it become unnecessary and wither away of itself.


In other words: under capitalism we have a state in the proper sense of the word, that is, a special machine for the suppression of one class by another, and of the majority by the minority at that. Naturally, the successful discharge of such a task as the systematic suppression of the exploited majority by the exploiting minority calls for the greatest ferocity and savagery in the work of suppression, it calls for seas of blood through which mankind has to wade in slavery, serfdom and wage labour.

Furthermore, during the *transition* from capitalism to Communism suppression is *still* necessary: but it is now the suppres-

sion of the exploiting minority by the exploited majority. A special apparatus, a special machine for suppression, the "state," is *still* necessary, but this is now a transitory state; it is no longer a state in the proper sense; for the suppression of the minority of exploiters by the majority of the wage-slaves of *yesterday* is comparatively so easy, simple and natural a task that it will entail far less bloodshed than the suppression of the risings of slaves, serfs or wage labourers, and it will cost mankind far less. And it is compatible with the extension of democracy to such an overwhelming majority of the population that the need for a *special machine* of suppression will begin to disappear. The exploiters are naturally unable to suppress the people without a very complex machine for performing this task; but *the people* can suppress the exploiters even with a very simple "machine," almost without a "machine," without a special apparatus, by the simple *organization of the armed masses* (such as the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, we may remark, running ahead a little).

Finally, only Communism makes the state absolutely unnecessary, for there is *nobody* to be suppressed—"nobody" in the sense of *a class*, in the sense of a systematic struggle against a definite section of the population. We are not utopians, and we do not in the least deny the possibility and inevitability of excesses on the part of *individual persons*, or the need to suppress *such* excesses. But, in the first place, no special machine, no special apparatus of repression is needed for this; this will be done by the armed people itself, as simply and as readily as any crowd of civilized people, even in modern society, parts two people who are fighting, or interferes to prevent a woman from being assaulted. And, secondly, we know that the fundamental social cause of excesses, which consist of violating the rules of social intercourse, is the exploitation of the masses, their want and their poverty. With the removal of this chief cause, excesses will inevitably begin to "*wither*

away." We do not know how quickly and in what order, but we know that they will wither away. With their withering away the state *will also wither away*.

Without indulging in utopias, Marx defined more fully what can be defined *now* regarding this future, namely, the difference between the lower and higher phases (degrees, stages) of Communist society. 

3. THE FIRST PHASE OF COMMUNIST SOCIETY

In the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx goes into some detail to disprove Lassalle's idea that under Socialism the worker will receive the "undiminished" or "whole proceeds of his labour." Marx shows that from the whole of the social labour of society it is necessary to deduct a reserve fund, a fund for the expansion of production, for the replacement of "used up" machinery, and so on; then, also, from the means of consumption must be deducted a fund for the costs of administration, for schools, hospitals, homes for the aged, and so on.

Instead of Lassalle's hazy, obscure, general phrase ("the whole proceeds of his labour to the worker") Marx makes a sober estimate of exactly how Socialist society will have to manage its affairs. Marx proceeds to make a *concrete* analysis of the conditions of life of a society in which there will be no capitalism, and says:

"What we have to deal with here [in analysing the program of the workers' party] is a Communist society, not as it has *developed* on its own foundation, but, on the contrary, as it *emerges* from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges."

And it is this Communist society—a society which has just come into the world out of the womb of capitalism and which, in every respect, bears the birthmarks of the old society—that Marx terms the “first,” or lower phase of Communist society.

The means of production are no longer the private property of individuals. The means of production belong to the whole of society. Every member of society, performing a certain part of the socially-necessary labour, receives a certificate from society to the effect that he has done such and such an amount of work. And with this certificate he draws from the social stock of means of consumption a corresponding quantity of products. After deduction of the amount of labour which goes to the public fund, every worker, therefore, receives from society as much as he has given it.

“Equality” apparently reigns supreme.

But when Lassalle, having such a social order in view (usually called Socialism, but termed by Marx the first phase of Communism), speaks of this as “equitable distribution,” and says that this is “the equal right” of “all members of society” to “equal proceeds of labour,” he is mistaken, and Marx exposes his error.

“Equal right,” says Marx, we indeed have here; but it is *still* a “bourgeois right,” which, like every right, *presupposes inequality*. Every right is an application of an *equal* standard to *different* people who in fact are not alike, are not equal to one another; that is why “equal right” is really a violation of equality and an injustice. As a matter of fact, every man, having performed as much social labour as another, receives an equal share of the social product (after the above-mentioned deductions).

But people are not alike: one is strong, another is weak; one is married, another is not; one has more children, another has less, and so on. And the conclusion Marx draws is:

"... With an equal output and hence an equal share in the social consumption fund, one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another, and so on. To avoid all these defects, right, instead of being equal, would have to be unequal..."

Hence, the first phase of Communism cannot yet produce justice and equality; differences, and unjust differences, in wealth will still exist, but the *exploitation* of man by man will have become impossible, because it will be impossible to seize the *means of production*, the factories, machines, land, etc., as private property. In smashing Lassalle's petty-bourgeois, confused phrases about "equality" and "justice" *in general*, Marx shows the *course of development* of Communist society, which at first is *compelled* to abolish *only* the "injustice" of the means of production having been seized by private individuals, and which *cannot* at once abolish the other injustice, which consists in the distribution of articles of consumption "according to the amount of labour performed" (and not according to needs).

The vulgar economists, including the bourgeois professors and also "our" Tugan-Baranovsky, constantly reproach the Socialists with forgetting the inequality of people and with "dreaming" of abolishing this inequality. Such a reproach, as we see, only proves the extreme ignorance of Messieurs the Bourgeois Ideologists.

Marx not only scrupulously takes into account the inevitable inequality of men but he also ~~takes~~ into account the fact that the mere conversion of the means of production into the common property of the whole of society (usually called "Socialism") *does not remove* the defects of distribution and the inequality of "bourgeois right" which *continue to prevail* as long as products are divided "according to the amount of labour performed." Continuing, Marx says:

"But these defects are inevitable in the first phase of Communist society as it is when it has just emerged after prolonged birth pangs from capitalist society. Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and the cultural development thereby determined."

And so, in the first phase of Communist society (usually called Socialism) "bourgeois right" is *not* abolished in its entirety, but only in part, only in proportion to the economic transformation so far attained, *i.e.*, only in respect of the means of production. "Bourgeois right" recognizes them as the private property of individuals. Socialism converts them into *common* property. *To that extent*—and to that extent alone—"bourgeois right" disappears.

However, it continues to exist as far as its other part is concerned; it continues to exist in the capacity of regulator (determining factor) in the distribution of products and the allotment of labour among the members of society. The Socialist principle: "He who does not work, neither shall he eat," is *already* realized; the other Socialist principle: "An equal amount of products for an equal amount of labour," is also *already* realized. But this is not yet Communism, and it does not yet abolish "bourgeois right," which gives to unequal individuals, in return for an unequal (actually unequal) amount of labour, an equal amount of products.

This is a "defect," says Marx, but it is unavoidable in the first phase of Communism; for if we are not to indulge in utopianism, we must not think that having overthrown capitalism people will at once learn to work for society *without any standard of right*; and indeed the abolition of capitalism *does not immediately* create the economic premises for *such* a change.

And there is as yet no other standard than that of "bourgeois right." To this extent, therefore, there is still need for a state,

which, while safeguarding the public ownership of the means of production would safeguard equality of labour and equality in the distribution of products.

The state withers away in so far as there are no longer any capitalists, any classes, and, consequently, no *class* can be *suppressed*.

But the state has not yet completely withered away, since there still remains the safeguarding of "bourgeois right," which sanctifies actual inequality. For the complete withering away of the state complete Communism is necessary.

4. THE HIGHER PHASE OF COMMUNIST SOCIETY

Marx continues:

"In a higher phase of Communist society, after the enslaving subordination of individuals under division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour, from a mere means of life, has itself become the prime necessity of life; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully left behind and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!"

Only now can we appreciate to the full the correctness of Engels' remarks in which he mercilessly ridiculed the absurdity of combining the words "freedom" and "state." While the state exists there is no freedom. When there will be freedom, there will be no state.

The economic basis for the complete withering away of the state is such a high stage of development of Communism that the


antithesis between mental and physical labour disappears, that is to say, when one of the principal sources of modern *social* inequality disappears—a source, moreover, which cannot be removed immediately by the mere conversion of the means of production into public property, by the mere expropriation of the capitalists.


This expropriation will *facilitate* an enormous development of productive forces. And seeing how capitalism is already *retarding* this development to an incredible degree, seeing how much progress could be achieved even on the basis of the present level of modern technique, we are entitled to say with the fullest confidence that the expropriation of the capitalists will inevitably result in an enormous development of the productive forces of human society. But how rapidly this development will proceed, how soon it will reach the point of breaking away from the division of labour, of removing the antithesis between mental and physical labour, or transforming labour into “the prime necessity of life”—we do not and *cannot* know.

That is why we are entitled to speak only of the inevitable withering away of the state, emphasizing the protracted nature of this process and its dependence upon the rapidity of development of the *higher phase* of Communism, and leaving the question of length of time, or the concrete forms of the withering away, quite open, because there is *no* material for an answer to these questions.

The state will be able to wither away completely when society applies the rule: “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.” *i.e.*, when people have become so accustomed to observing the fundamental rules of social intercourse and when their labour is so productive that they will voluntarily work *according to their ability*. “The narrow horizon of bourgeois right,” which compels one to calculate with the stringency of a Shylock whether one has not worked half an hour more than another, whether one is not getting less pay than another—this narrow

horizon will then be left behind. There will then be no need for society to regulate the quantity of products to be distributed to each; each will take freely "according to his needs."

From the bourgeois point of view, it is easy to declare that such a social order is "a pure utopia" and to sneer at the Socialists for promising everyone the right to receive from society, without any control of the labour of the individual citizen, any quantity of truffles, automobiles, pianos, etc. Even now, most bourgeois "savants" confine themselves to sneering in this way, thereby displaying at once their ignorance and their mercenary defence of capitalism. 

Ignorance—for it has never entered the head of any Socialist to "promise" that the higher phase of the development of Communism will arrive; but the great Socialists, in *foreseeing* its arrival, presuppose not the present productivity of labour *and not the present* ordinary run of people, who like the seminary students in Pomyalovsky's stories,* are capable of damaging the stocks of social wealth "just for fun" and of *demanding the impossible.* 

Until the "higher" phase of Communism arrives, the Socialists demand the *strictest* control by society *and by the state* of the measure of labour and the measure of consumption; but this control must *start* with the expropriation of the capitalists, with the establishment of workers' control over the capitalists, and must be carried out not by a state of bureaucrats, but by a state of *armed workers.*

The mercenary defence of capitalism by the bourgeois ideologists (and their hangers-on, like Messrs. Tsereteli, Chernov and Co.) lies in their *substituting* controversies and discussions about the distant future for the essential and imperative questions of

* The reference here is to N. Pomyalovsky's *Sketches of Seminary Life* in which this Russian novelist exposed the absurd system of education and brutal customs which held sway in the Russian theological schools in the fifties and sixties of the past century.—*Ed.*

present-day policy, viz., the expropriation of the capitalists, the conversion of all citizens into workers and employees of one huge "syndicate"—the whole state—and the complete subordination of the whole of the work of this syndicate to the really democratic state, the state of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

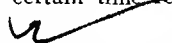
In reality, when a learned professor, and following him the philistine, and following him Messrs. Tsereteli and Chernov, talk of the unreasonable utopias, of the demagogic promises of the Bolsheviks, of the impossibility of "introducing" Socialism, it is the higher stage or phase of Communism they have in mind, which no one has ever promised or even thought to "introduce," because generally speaking it cannot be "introduced."

And this brings us to the question of the scientific difference between Socialism and Communism, which Engels touched on in his above-quoted argument about the incorrectness of the name "Social-Democrat." The political difference between the first, or lower, and the higher phase of Communism will in time, probably, be tremendous; but it would be ridiculous to take cognizance of this difference now, under capitalism, and only isolated anarchists, perhaps, could invest it with primary importance (if there are still people among the anarchists who have learned nothing from the "Plekhanovite" conversion of the Kropotkins, the Graveses, the Cornelissens and other "leading lights" of anarchism into social-chauvinists or "anarcho-trenchists," as Gay, one of the few anarchists who has still preserved a sense of honour and a conscience, has expressed it).

But the scientific difference between Socialism and Communism is clear. What is usually called Socialism was termed by Marx the "first" or lower phase of Communist society. In so far as the means of production become *common* property, the word "Communism" is also applicable here, providing we do not forget that it is *not* complete Communism. The great significance of

Marx's explanations is that here, too, he consistently applies materialist dialectics, the doctrine of development, and regards Communism as something which develops *out of* capitalism. Instead of scholastically invented, "concocted" definitions and fruitless disputes about words (what is Socialism? what is Communism?), Marx gives an analysis of what may be called the stages in the economic ripeness of Communism.

In its first phase, or first stage, Communism *cannot* as yet be fully ripe economically and entirely free from traditions and traces of capitalism. Hence the interesting phenomenon that Communism in its first phase retains "the narrow horizon of *bourgeois* right." Of course, bourgeois right in regard to the distribution of articles of *consumption* inevitably presupposes the existence of the *bourgeois state*, for right is nothing without an apparatus capable of *enforcing* the observance of the standards of right.

Consequently, not only bourgeois right, but even the bourgeois state for a certain time ~~remains~~ under Communism, without the bourgeoisie! 

This may sound like a paradox or simply a dialectical puzzle, of which Marxism is often accused by people who do not take the slightest trouble to study its extraordinarily profound content.

But as a matter of fact, remnants of the old surviving in the new confront us in life at every step, both in nature and in society. And Marx did not arbitrarily insert a scrap of "bourgeois" right into Communism, but indicated what is economically and politically inevitable in a society emerging *from the womb* of capitalism. "

Democracy is of great importance to the working class in its struggle for emancipation from the capitalists. But democracy is by no means a boundary that must not be overstepped; it is only one of the stages on the road from feudalism to capitalism, and from capitalism to Communism.

Democracy means equality. The great significance of the proletariat's struggle for equality and the significance of equality as a slogan will be clear if we correctly interpret it as meaning the abolition of *classes*. But democracy means only *formal* equality. And as soon as equality is obtained for all members of society *in relation to* the ownership of the means of production, that is, equality of labour and equality of wages, humanity will inevitably be confronted with the question of going beyond formal equality to real equality, *i.e.*, to applying the rule, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." By what stages, by what practical measures humanity will proceed to this higher aim—we do not and cannot know. But it is important to realize how infinitely mendacious is the ordinary bourgeois conception of Socialism as something lifeless, petrified, fixed once for all, whereas in reality *only* under Socialism will a rapid, genuine, really mass forward movement, embracing first the *majority* and then the whole of the population, commence in all spheres of social and personal life.

Democracy is a form of state, one of its varieties. Consequently, it, like every state, on the one hand represents the organized, systematic application of force against persons; but on the other hand it signifies the formal recognition of the equality of all citizens, the equal right of all to determine the structure and administration of the state. This, in turn, is connected with the fact that, at a certain stage in the development of democracy, it first rallies the proletariat as the revolutionary class against capitalism, and enables it to crush, smash to atoms, wipe off the face of the earth the bourgeois, even the republican bourgeois, state machine, the standing army, the police and bureaucracy, and to substitute for them a *more* democratic state machine, but a state machine nevertheless, in the shape of the armed masses of workers who are being transformed into a universal people's militia.

Here "quantity is transformed into quality"; *such* a degree of democracy implies overstepping the boundaries of bourgeois society, the beginning of its Socialist reconstruction. If, indeed, *all* take part in the administration of the state, capitalism cannot retain its hold. And the development of capitalism, in turn, itself creates the *premises* that really *enable* "all" to take part in the administration of the state. Some of the premises are: universal literacy, which is already achieved in a number of the most advanced capitalist countries, then the "training and disciplining" of millions of workers by the huge, complex, socialized apparatus of the post-office, railways, big factories, large-scale commerce, banking, etc., etc.

Given these *economic* premises it is quite possible, after the overthrow of the capitalists and bureaucrats, to proceed immediately, overnight, to supersede them in the *control* of production and distribution, in the work of *keeping account* of labour and products by the armed workers, by the whole of the armed population. (The question of control and accounting must not be confused with the question of the scientifically trained staff of engineers, agronomists and so on. These gentlemen are working today and obey the capitalists; they will work even better to-morrow and obey the armed workers.)

Accounting and control—that is the *main* thing required for the "setting up" and correct functioning of the *first phase* of Communist society. *All* citizens are transformed into the salaried employees of the state, which consists of the armed workers. *All* citizens become employees and workers of a *single* national state "syndicate." All that is required is that they should work equally—do their proper share of work—and get paid equally. The accounting and control necessary for this have been *simplified* by capitalism to an extreme and reduced to the extraordinarily simple operations—which any literate person can perform—of checking

and recording, knowledge of the four rules of arithmetic, and issuing receipts.*

When the *majority* of the people begin independently and everywhere to keep such accounts and maintain such control over the capitalists (now converted into employees) and over the intellectual gentry who preserve their capitalist habits, this control will really become universal, general, national; and there will be no way of getting away from it, there will be "nowhere to go."

The whole of society will have become a single office and a single factory, with equality of labour and equality of pay.

But this "factory" discipline, which the proletariat will extend to the whole of society after the defeat of the capitalists and the overthrow of the exploiters, is by no means our ideal, or our ultimate goal. It is but a necessary *step* for the purpose of thoroughly purging society of all the hideousness and foulness of capitalist exploitation, *and for further progress.*

From the moment all members of society, or even only the vast majority, have learned to administer the state *themselves*, have taken this business into their own hands, have "set up" control over the insignificant minority of capitalists, over the gentry who wish to preserve their capitalist habits, and over the workers who have been profoundly corrupted by capitalism—from this moment the need for government begins to disappear altogether. The more complete democracy, the nearer the moment approaches when it becomes unnecessary. The more democratic the "state" which consists of the armed workers, and which is "no longer a state in the proper sense of the word," the more rapidly *does every form* of the State begin to wither away.

* When most of the functions of the state are reduced to this accounting and control by the workers themselves, it will cease to be a "political state" and the "public functions will lose their political character and be transformed into simple administrative functions" (cf. above, Chapter IV, 2, Engels' "Controversy with the Anarchists").

For when *all* have learned to administer and actually do administer social production independently, independently keep accounts and exercise control over the idlers, the gentlefolk, the swindlers and similar "guardians of capitalist traditions," the escape from this national accounting and control will inevitably become so incredibly difficult, such a rare exception, and will probably be accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are practical men and not sentimental intellectuals, and they will scarcely allow anyone to trifle with them), that very soon the *necessity* of observing the simple, fundamental rules of human intercourse will become a *habit*.

And then the door will be wide open for the transition from the first phase of Communist society to its higher phase, and with it to the complete withering away of the state.*

* Continuing and developing the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state in the new historical situation, Comrade Stalin formulated the theory of the Socialist State and its tasks under the conditions of victorious Socialism and the building up of Communism.

In his Report to the Eighteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B) on the work of the Central Committee of the Party, Comrade Stalin said:

"... Lenin wrote his famous book, *The State and Revolution*, in August 1917, that is, a few months before the October Revolution and the establishment of the Soviet State. Lenin considered it the main task of this book to defend Marx's and Engels' doctrine of the state from the distortions and vulgarizations of the opportunists. Lenin was preparing to write a second volume of *The State and Revolution*, in which he intended to sum up the principal lessons of the experience of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917. There can be no doubt that Lenin intended in the second volume of his book to elaborate and develop the theory of the state on the basis of the experience gained during the existence of Soviet power in our country. Death, however, prevented him from carrying this task into execution. But what Lenin did not manage to do should be done by his disciples.

"The state arose because society split up into antagonistic classes; it arose in order to keep in restraint the exploited majority in the

interests of the exploiting minority. The instruments of state authority have been mainly concentrated in the army, the punitive organs, the espionage service, the prisons. Two basic functions characterize the activity of the state: at home (the main function), to keep in restraint the exploited majority; abroad (not the main function), to extend the territory of its class, the ruling class, at the expense of the territory of other states, or to defend the territory of its own state from attack by other states. Such was the case in slave society and under feudalism. Such is the case under capitalism.

"In order to overthrow capitalism it was not only necessary to remove the bourgeoisie from power, it was not only necessary to expropriate the capitalists, but also to smash entirely the bourgeois state machine and its old army, its bureaucratic officialdom and its police force, and to substitute for it a new, proletarian form of state, a new, Socialist state. And that, as we know, is exactly what the Bolsheviks did. But it does not follow that the new proletarian state may not preserve certain functions of the old state, changed to suit the requirements of the proletarian state. Still less does it follow that the forms of our Socialist state must remain unchanged, that all the original functions of our state must be fully preserved in future. As a matter of fact, the forms of our state are changing and will continue to change in line with the development of our country and with the changes in the international situation.

"Lenin was absolutely right when he said:

"The forms of bourgeois states are extremely varied, but in essence they are all the same: in one way or another, in the final analysis, all these states are inevitably the *dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*. The transition from capitalism to Communism will certainly create a great variety and abundance of political forms, but their essence will inevitably be the same: *the dictatorship of the proletariat.*' (*State and Revolution.*)

"Since the October Revolution, our Socialist state has passed through two main phases in its development.

"The first phase was the period from the October revolution to the elimination of the exploiting classes. The principal task in that period was to suppress the resistance of the overthrown classes, to organize the defence of the country against the attack of the interventionists, to restore industry and agriculture, and to prepare the conditions for the elimination of the capitalist elements. Accordingly, in this period our state performed

two main functions. The first function was to suppress the overthrown classes inside the country. In this respect our state bore a superficial resemblance to previous states whose functions had also been to suppress recalcitrants, with the fundamental difference, however, that our state suppressed the exploiting minority in the interests of the labouring majority, while previous states had suppressed the exploited majority in the interests of the exploiting minority. The second function was to defend the country from foreign attack. In this respect it likewise bore a superficial resemblance to previous states, which also undertook the armed defence of their countries, with the fundamental difference, however, that our state defended from foreign attack the gains of the labouring majority, while previous states in such cases defended the wealth and privileges of the exploiting minority. Our state had yet a third function: this was the work of economic organization and cultural education performed by our state bodies with the purpose of developing the infant shoots of the new, Socialist economic system and re-educating the people in the spirit of Socialism. But this new function did not attain to any considerable development in that period.

"The second phase was the period from the elimination of the capitalist elements in town and country to the complete victory of the Socialist economic system and the adoption of the new Constitution. The principal task in this period was to establish the Socialist economic system all over the country and to eliminate the last remnants of the capitalist elements, to bring about a cultural revolution, and to form a thoroughly modern army for the defence of the country. And the functions of our Socialist state changed accordingly. The function of military suppression inside the country ceased, died away; for exploitation had been abolished, there were no more exploiters left, and so there was no one to suppress. In place of this function of suppression the state acquired the function of protecting Socialist property from thieves and pilferers of the people's property. The function of defending the country from foreign attack fully remained; consequently, the Red Army and the Navy also fully remained, as did the punitive organs and the intelligence service, which are indispensable for the detection and punishment of the spies, assassins and wreckers sent into our country by foreign espionage services. The function of economic organization and cultural education by the state organs also remained, and was developed to the full. Now the main task of our state inside the country is the work of peaceful economic organization and cultural education. As for our army, punitive organs, and intelligence service, their edge is no

longer turned to the inside of the country but to the outside, against external enemies.

"As you see, we now have an entirely new, Socialist state, without precedent in history and differing considerably in form and functions from the Socialist state of the first phase.

"But development cannot stop there. We are going ahead, towards Communism. Will our state remain in the period of Communism also?

"Yes, it will, unless the capitalist encirclement is liquidated, and unless the danger of foreign military attack has disappeared.

"Naturally, of course, the forms of our state will again change in conformity with the change in the situation at home and abroad.

"No, it will not remain and will atrophy if the capitalist encirclement is liquidated and a Socialist encirclement takes its place.

"That is how the question stands with regard to the Socialist state."
(See *Problems of Leninism*. Moscow, 1945, Eng. ed., pp. 635-638.)

CHAPTER VI

THE VULGARIZATION OF MARXISM BY THE OPPORTUNISTS

THE QUESTION of the relation of the state to the social revolution, and of the social revolution to the state, like the question of revolution generally, troubled the prominent theoreticians and publicists of the Second International (1889-1914) very little. But the most characteristic thing in the process of the gradual growth of opportunism which led to the collapse of the Second International in 1914, is the fact that even when these people actually were confronted with this question they *tried to evade it* or else failed to notice it.

In general, it may be said that *evasiveness* on the question of the relation of the proletarian revolution to the state—an evasiveness which was to the advantage of opportunism and fostered it—resulted in the *distortion* of Marxism and in its complete vulgarization.

To characterize this lamentable process, if only briefly, we shall take the most prominent theoreticians of Marxism: Plekhanov and Kautsky.

1. PLEKHANOV'S CONTROVERSY WITH THE ANARCHISTS

Plekhanov wrote a special pamphlet on the relation of anarchism to Socialism, entitled *Anarchism and Socialism*, published in German in 1894.

Plekhanov managed somehow to treat this subject while com-

pletely ignoring the most vital, topical, and politically most essential point in the struggle against anarchism, *viz.*, the relation of the revolution to the state, and the question of the state in general! His pamphlet divides into two parts: the one is historical and literary, and contains valuable material on the history of the ideas of Stirner, Proudhon and others; the other is philistine, and contains a clumsy dissertation on the theme that an anarchist cannot be distinguished from a bandit.

An amusing combination of subjects and most characteristic of Plekhanov's whole activity on the eve of the revolution and during the revolutionary period in Russia. Indeed, in the years of 1905 to 1917, Plekhanov revealed himself as a semi-doctrinaire and semi-philistine who, in politics, followed in the wake of the bourgeoisie.

We have seen how, in their controversy with the anarchists, Marx and Engels very thoroughly explained their views on the relation of revolution to the state. In 1891, in his foreword to Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Engels wrote that "we"—that is Engels and Marx—"were at that time, hardly two years after the Hague Congress of the [First] International, engaged in the most violent struggle against Bakunin and his anarchists."

The anarchists had tried to claim the Paris Commune as their "own," so to say, as a corroboration of their doctrine; and they utterly failed to understand its lessons and Marx's analysis of these lessons. Anarchism has failed to give anything even approaching a true solution to the concrete political problems, *viz.*, must the old state machine be *smashed*? and *what* should supersede it?

But to speak of "anarchism and Socialism" and completely evade the question of the state, *to fail to take note* of the whole development of Marxism before and after the Commune, inevita-

bly means slipping into opportunism. For the very thing opportunism needs is that the two questions just mentioned should *not* be raised at all. That *in itself* is a victory for opportunism.

2. KAUTSKY'S CONTROVERSY WITH THE OPPORTUNISTS

Undoubtedly an immeasurably larger number of Kautsky's works have been translated into Russian than into any other language. It is not without reason that German Social-Democrats sometimes say in jest that Kautsky is read more in Russia than in Germany (we may say parenthetically, that there is deeper historical significance in this jest than those who first made it suspected; for the Russian workers, by creating in 1905 an extraordinarily strong and unprecedented demand for the best works of the best Social-Democratic literature in the world, and by receiving translations and editions of these works in quantities unheard of in other countries transplanted, so to speak, at an accelerated pace the enormous experience of a neighbouring, more advanced country to the young soil of our proletarian movement).

Besides his popularization of Marxism, Kautsky is particularly known in our country for his controversy with the opportunists, and with Bernstein at their head. But one fact is almost unknown, one which cannot be overlooked if we are to set ourselves the task of investigating how it was that Kautsky drifted into the unbelievably disgraceful morass of confusion and defence of social-chauvinism during the great crisis of 1914-15. This fact is the following: shortly before he came out against the prominent representatives of opportunism in France (Millerand and Jaurès) and in Germany (Bernstein), Kautsky betrayed very considerable vacillation. The Marxian journal, *Zarya (Dawn)*, which was published in Stuttgart in 1901-02, and advocated revolutionary proletarian views, was forced to *enter into controversy* with Kautsky, to char-

acterize as "classic" the half-hearted, evasive and conciliatory resolution on the opportunists that he proposed at the International Socialist Congress in Paris in 1900. Kautsky's letters published in Germany reveal no less hesitancy on his part before he took the field against Bernstein.

Of immeasurably greater significance, however, is the fact that, in his controversy with the opportunists, in his formulation of the question and his method of treating it, we can observe, now that we are investigating the *history* of his latest betrayal of Marxism, his systematic gravitation towards opportunism precisely on the question of the state.

Let us take Kautsky's first important work against opportunism, his *Bernstein and the Social-Democratic Program*. Kautsky refutes Bernstein in detail, but the characteristic thing about it is the following: Bernstein in his *Premises of Socialism*, of Herostratean fame, accuses Marxism of "*Blanquism*" (an accusation since repeated thousands of times by the opportunists and liberal bourgeois in Russia against the representatives of revolutionary Marxism, the Bolsheviks). In this connection Bernstein dwells particularly on Marx's *The Civil War in France*, and tries, quite unsuccessfully, as we have seen, to identify Marx's views on the lessons of the Commune, with those of Proudhon. Bernstein pays particular attention to Marx's conclusion, which the latter emphasized in his 1872 preface to *The Communist Manifesto*, viz., that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purpose."

This utterance "pleased" Bernstein so much that he repeats it no less than three times in his book—interpreting it in the most distorted opportunist sense.

As we have seen, Marx meant that the working class must *smash, break, shatter* (*Sprengung*—explode, the expression used by Engels) the whole state machine. But according to Bernstein

it would appear as though Marx in these words warned the working class *against* excessive revolutionary zeal when seizing power.

A cruder and more hideous distortion of Marx's idea cannot be imagined.

How, then, did Kautsky proceed in his detailed refutation of Bernsteinism?

He refrained from probing the depths of the distortion of Marxism by opportunism on this point. He cited the above-quoted passage from Engels' introduction to Marx's *Civil War* and said that according to Marx the working class cannot *simply* lay hold of the *ready-made* state machinery, but *can lay hold of it*, generally speaking—and that was all. Not a word does Kautsky utter about the fact that Bernstein attributed to Marx the *very opposite* of Marx's real views, about the fact that the task of the proletarian revolution which Marx advanced in 1852 was to "smash" the state machine.

The result was that the most essential difference between Marxism and opportunism on the tasks of the proletarian revolution was glossed over by Kautsky!

"We can safely leave the solution of the problem of the proletarian dictatorship to the future," said Kautsky, writing "*against*" Bernstein. (P. 172, German edition.)

This is not an argument *against* Bernstein, but, in essence, a *concession* to him, a surrender to opportunism; for at present the opportunists ask nothing better than to "safely leave to the future" all fundamental questions of the tasks of the proletarian revolution.

From 1852 to 1891, for forty years, Marx and Engels taught the proletariat that it must smash the state machine. Yet, in 1899, Kautsky, confronted on this point with the complete betrayal of Marxism by the opportunists, fraudulently *substituted* for the

question of whether it was necessary to smash this machine the question of the concrete forms in which it was to be smashed, and then tried to take refuge behind the "indisputable" (and barren) philistine truth that concrete forms cannot be known in advance!!

A gulf separates Marx and Kautsky in their respective attitudes towards the task of the proletarian party in preparing the working class for revolution.

We shall take the next, more mature, work by Kautsky, which also, to a large extent, was written to refute opportunist errors. This is his pamphlet, *The Social Revolution*. In this pamphlet the author chose as his special theme the question of "the proletarian revolution" and "the proletarian regime." In it he gave much that was exceedingly valuable, but he just *evaded* the question of the state. Throughout the pamphlet the author speaks of the conquest of state power—and nothing else; that is, he chooses a formula which makes a concession to the opportunists, inasmuch as it *admits* the possibility of power being seized *without* destroying the state machine. The very thing which Marx, in 1872, declared to be "obsolete" in the program of *The Communist Manifesto* is *revived* by Kautsky in 1902!

A special section in the pamphlet is devoted to "the forms and weapon of the social revolution." Here Kautsky speaks of the political mass strike, of civil war, and of the "instruments of force of the modern large state, such as the bureaucracy and the army"; but not a word does he say about what the Commune had already taught the workers. Evidently, Engels' warning, particularly to the German Socialists, against "superstitious reverence" for the state was not an idle one.

Kautsky explains the matter by stating that the victorious proletariat "will carry out the democratic program," and he goes on to formulate its clauses. But not a word does he utter about the new things the year 1871 taught us concerning the supersession

of bourgeois democracy by proletarian democracy. Kautsky disposes of the question by "solid" banalities such as:

"Still, it goes without saying that we shall not achieve power under present conditions. Revolution itself presupposes a long and deep-going struggle, which will change our present political and social structure."

Undoubtedly, this "goes without saying," just as does the truth that horses eat oats, or that the Volga flows into the Caspian Sea. Only it is a pity that an empty and bombastic phrase about "deep-going" struggle is used as a means of *evading* a question of vital interest to the revolutionary proletariat, namely, *what* expresses the "deep-going" nature of *its* revolution in relation to the state, in relation to democracy, as distinct from previous, non-proletarian revolutions.

By evading this question, Kautsky *really* makes a concession to opportunism on this most essential point, although *in words* he declares terrible war against it and emphasizes the importance of the "idea of revolution" (how much is this "idea" worth when one is afraid to teach the workers the concrete lessons of revolution?), or says, "revolutionary idealism before everything else," or declares that the English workers are now "little more than petty bourgeois."

"The most varied forms of enterprises—bureaucratic [??], trade union, co-operative, private ... can exist side by side in Socialist society," Kautsky writes. "... There are enterprises which cannot do without a bureaucratic [??] organization, for example, the railways. Here the democratic organization might take the following form: the workers elect delegates who form a sort of parliament, which draws up the working regulations and supervises the management of the bureaucratic apparatus.

The management of other enterprises may be transferred to the trade unions, and still others may become co-operative enterprises" (pp. 148 and 115 of the Russian translation published in Geneva in 1903).

This reasoning is erroneous, and is a step backward compared with what Marx and Engels explained in the 'seventies, using the lessons of the Commune as an example.

As far as the alleged need for a "bureaucratic" organization is concerned, there is no difference whatever between railways and any other enterprise in large-scale machine industry, any factory, large store, or large-scale capitalist agricultural enterprise. The technique of all such enterprises requires the strictest discipline, the greatest accuracy on the part of everyone in carrying out his allotted task, for otherwise the whole enterprise would fail to work. or machinery or goods be damaged. In all such enterprises the workers will, of course, "elect delegates who will form *a sort of parliament.*"

But the whole point is that this "sort of parliament" will *not* be a parliament like the bourgeois-parliamentary institutions. The whole point is that this "sort of parliament" will *not* merely "draw up the working regulations and supervise the management of the bureaucratic apparatus," as Kautsky, whose ideas do not go beyond the framework of bourgeois parliamentarism, imagines. In Socialist society the "sort of parliament" consisting of workers' deputies will, of course, "draw up the working regulations and superintend the management" of the "apparatus"—*but* this apparatus will *not* be "bureaucratic." The workers, having conquered political power, will smash the old bureaucratic apparatus, they will shatter it to its very foundations, they will not leave a single stone of it standing; and they will put in its place a new one, consisting of workers and office employees. *against* whose

transformation into bureaucrats the measures will at once be taken which were specified in detail by Marx and Engels: 1) not only election, but also recall at any time; 2) payment not exceeding that of a workman; 3) immediate introduction of control and supervision by *all*, so that *all* shall become "bureaucrats" for a time and, therefore, *nobody* may become a "bureaucrat."

Kautsky has not reflected at all on Marx's words: "The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time."

Kautsky has not in the least understood the difference between bourgeois parliamentarism, which combines democracy (*not for the people*) with bureaucracy (*against the people*), and proletarian democracy, which will take immediate steps to cut bureaucracy down to the roots, and which will be able to carry out these measures to the end, to the complete abolition of bureaucracy, to the introduction of complete democracy for the people.

Kautsky here betrays the old "superstitious reverence" for the state, and "superstitious belief" in bureaucracy.

We shall now pass on to the last and best of Kautsky's works against the opportunists, his pamphlet *The Road to Power* (which, I believe, has not been translated into Russian, for it was published at the time when the severest reaction reigned here, in 1909). This pamphlet marks a considerable step forward, inasmuch as it does not deal with the revolutionary program in general, as in the pamphlet of 1899 against Bernstein, nor with the tasks of the social revolution irrespective of the time of its occurrence, as in the pamphlet, *The Social Revolution*, 1902; it deals with the concrete conditions which compel us to recognize that the "revolutionary era" is *approaching*.

The author definitely calls attention to the intensification of class antagonisms in general and to imperialism, which plays a particularly important part in this connection. After the "revolu-

tionary period of 1789-1871" in Western Europe, he says, a similar period began in the East in 1905. A world war is approaching with menacing rapidity. "The proletariat can no longer talk of premature revolution." "We have entered a revolutionary period." The "revolutionary era is beginning."

These declarations are perfectly clear. This pamphlet of Kautsky's should serve as a measure of comparison between what German Social-Democracy *promised to be* before the imperialist war and the depth of degradation to which it—Kautsky included—fell when the war broke out. "The present situation," Kautsky wrote, in the pamphlet we are examining, "brings the danger that we (*i.e.*, German Social-Democracy) may easily appear to be more moderate than we are." Actually, it turned out that the German Social-Democratic Party was much more moderate and opportunist than it appeared to be!

The more characteristic is it, therefore, that although he definitely declared that the revolutionary era had already begun, Kautsky, in the pamphlet which he himself said was devoted precisely to an analysis of the "*political* revolution," again completely evaded the question of the state.

These evasions of the question, these omissions and equivocations, inevitably led in their sum total to that complete surrender to opportunism with which we shall now have to deal.

German Social-Democracy, in the person of Kautsky, seems to have declared: I keep to revolutionary views (1899), I recognize, in particular, the inevitability of the social revolution of the proletariat (1902), I recognize the approach of a new revolutionary era (1909). Still, now that the question of the tasks of the proletarian revolution in relation to the state is being raised, I go back on what Marx said as long ago as 1852 (1912).

It was precisely in this direct form that the question was put in Kautsky's controversy with Pannekoek.

3. KAUTSKY'S CONTROVERSY WITH PANNEKOEK

In opposing Kautsky, Pannekoek came out as one of the representatives of the "Left radical" trend which counted in its ranks Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Radek and others. Advocating revolutionary tactics, they were united in the conviction that Kautsky was going over to the position of the "centre," which wavered without principles between Marxism and opportunism. The correctness of this view was fully confirmed by the war, when this "centre" (wrongly called Marxist) trend, or Kautskyism, revealed itself in all its repulsive wretchedness.

In an article touching on the question of the state, entitled "Mass Action and Revolution" (*Neue Zeit*, 1912. Vol. XXX, 2), Pannekoek characterized Kautsky's position as an attitude of "passive radicalism," as "a theory of inactive waiting." "Kautsky loses sight of the process of revolution," said Pannekoek (p. 616).

In presenting the problem in this way, Pannekoek approached the subject which interests us, namely, the tasks of the proletarian revolution in relation to the state.

"The struggle of the proletariat," he wrote, "is not merely a struggle against the bourgeoisie *for* state power, but a struggle *against* state power. . . . The content of the proletarian revolution is the destruction and dissolution [*Auflösung*] of the instruments of power of the state with the aid of the instruments of power of the proletariat. . . . The struggle will cease only when the organization of the state is utterly destroyed. The organization of the majority will then have demonstrated its superiority by having destroyed the organization of the ruling minority" (p. 548).

The formulation in which Pannekoek presented his ideas suffers from serious defects, but its meaning is sufficiently clear: and it is interesting to note *how* Kautsky combated it.

"Up to now," he wrote, "the difference between the Social-Democrats and the anarchists has been that the former wished to conquer state power while the latter wished to destroy it. Pannekoek wants to do both" (p. 724).

Although Pannekoek's exposition lacks concreteness—not to speak of other defects in his article which have no bearing on the present subject—Kautsky seized on the *principle* of the issue indicated by Pannekoek; and on *this fundamental* question of *principle* Kautsky abandoned the Marxian position entirely and completely went over to opportunism. His definition of the difference between the Social-Democrats and the anarchists is absolutely wrong, and he utterly vulgarized and distorted Marxism.

The difference between the Marxists and the anarchists is this: 1) the former, while aiming at the complete abolition of the state, recognize that this aim can only be achieved after classes have been abolished by the Socialist revolution, as the result of the establishment of Socialism, which leads to the withering away of the state; the latter want to abolish the state completely overnight, failing to understand the conditions under which the state can be abolished. 2) The former recognize that after the proletariat has conquered political power it must utterly destroy the old state machine and substitute for it a new one consisting of the organization of the armed workers, after the type of the Commune; the latter, while insisting on the destruction of the state machine, have absolutely no clear idea of *what* the proletariat will put in its place and *how* it will use its revolutionary power; the anarchists even deny that the revolutionary proletariat should utilize the state power, that is, they deny its revolutionary dictatorship. 3) The

former demand that the proletariat be prepared for revolution by utilizing the present state; the anarchists reject this.

In this controversy it is Pannekoek and not Kautsky who represents Marxism, for it was Marx who taught that the proletariat cannot simply conquer state power in the sense that the old state apparatus passes into new hands, but must smash, break this apparatus and substitute a new one for it.

Kautsky abandons Marxism for the camp of the opportunists, for this destruction of the state machine, which is utterly unacceptable to the opportunists, completely disappears from his argument, and he leaves a loop-hole which enables them to interpret "conquest" as simply meaning the winning of a majority.

To cover up his distortion of Marxism, Kautsky behaves like a pedant: he juggles with "quotations" from Marx himself. In 1850 Marx wrote that "a decisive centralization of power in the hands of the state" was necessary, and Kautsky triumphantly asks: does Pannekoek want to destroy "centralism"?

This is simply a trick, similar to Bernstein's identification of the views of Marxism and Proudhonism on the subject of federalism *versus* centralism.

Kautsky's "quotation" is neither here nor there. The new state machine permits of centralism as much as the old. If the workers voluntarily unite their armed forces, this will be centralism, but this centralism will be based on the "complete destruction" of the centralized state apparatus—the standing army, the police and the bureaucracy. Kautsky acts exactly like a swindler when he ignores the perfectly well-known arguments of Marx and Engels on the Commune and plucks out a quotation which has nothing to do with the case.

"Perhaps Pannekoek," Kautsky continues, "wants to abolish the state functions of the officials? But we cannot do without

officials in the party and the trade unions, much less in the state administration. Our program does not demand the abolition of state officials, but that they be elected by the people. . . . We are not discussing here the form the administrative apparatus of the 'future state' will assume, but whether our political struggle will dissolve [*auflöst*] the state power *before we have captured it* [Kautsky's italics]. Which Ministry and its officials could be abolished?" Then follows an enumeration of the Ministers of Education, Justice, Finance and War. "No, not one of the present Ministries will be removed by our political struggle against the government. . . . I repeat, in order to avoid misunderstanding: we are not discussing here the form the 'future state' will assume as a result of the victory of Social-Democracy, but as to how our opposition will change the present state" (p. 725).

This is an obvious trick: Pannekoek raised the question of *revolution*. Both the title of his article and the passages quoted above clearly indicate this: In skipping to the question of "opposition" Kautsky substitutes the opportunist for the revolutionary point of view. What he says is: at present we are an opposition; what we shall be *after* we have captured power, that we shall see. *Revolution has vanished!* And that is exactly what the opportunists wanted.

Opposition and the political struggle in general are beside the point; we are concerned with *revolution*. Revolution means that the proletariat will *destroy* the "administrative apparatus" and the *whole* state machine, and substitute for it a new one, consisting of the armed workers. Kautsky reveals a "superstitious reverence" for "Ministries," but why can they not be superseded, say, by committees of experts, working under sovereign, all-powerful Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies?

The point is not whether the "Ministries" will remain, or whether "committees of experts" or other institutions will be set up; this is quite unimportant. The point is whether the old state machine (connected by thousands of threads with the bourgeoisie and completely saturated with routine and inertia) shall remain, or be *destroyed* and superseded by a *new* one. Revolution must not mean that the new class will command, govern with the aid of the *old* state machine, but that this class will *smash* this machine and command, govern with the aid of a *new* machine. Kautsky slurs over this *fundamental* idea of Marxism, or he has utterly failed to understand it.

His question about officials clearly shows that he does not understand the lessons of the Commune or the teachings of Marx. "We cannot do without officials in the party and the trade unions...."

We cannot do without officials *under capitalism*, under the rule of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat is oppressed, the toiling masses are enslaved by capitalism. Under capitalism democracy is restricted, cramped, curtailed, mutilated by all the conditions of wage-slavery, the poverty and misery, of the masses. This is why, and the only reason why, the officials of our political and industrial organizations are corrupted—or, more precisely, tend to be corrupted—by the conditions of capitalism and betray a tendency to become bureaucrats, *i.e.*, privileged persons divorced from the masses and standing *above* the masses.

That is the *essence* of bureaucracy; and until the capitalists have been expropriated and the bourgeoisie overthrown, *even* proletarian officials will inevitably be "bureaucratized" to some extent.

According to Kautsky, since we shall have elected officials under Socialism, we shall still have bureaucrats; bureaucracy will remain! This is exactly where he is wrong. It was precisely the example of the Commune that Marx quoted to show that under Socialism officials will cease to be "bureaucrats"; they will cease to be so *in*

proportion as, in addition to the election of officials, the principle of recall at any time is introduced, *and* as salaries are reduced to the level of the wages of the average worker, *and too*, as parliamentary institutions are superseded by "working bodies, executive and legislative at the same time."

In essence, the whole of Kautsky's argument against Pannekoek and particularly his wonderful point that we cannot do without officials even in our party and trade union organizations, is merely a repetition of Bernstein's old "arguments" against Marxism in general. In his renegade book, *The Premises of Socialism*, Bernstein combats "primitive" democracy, combats what he calls "doctrinaire democracy," imperative mandates, unpaid officials, impotent central representative bodies, etc. To prove that "primitive democracy" is unsound, Bernstein refers to the experience of the British trade unions, as interpreted by the Webbs. Seventy years of development "in absolute freedom," he says (p. 137, German edition), convinced the trade unions that primitive democracy was useless, and they substituted ordinary democracy for it. *i.e.* parliamentarism combined with bureaucracy.

As a matter of fact the trade unions did not develop "in absolute freedom" but *in absolute capitalist slavery*, under which a number of concessions to the prevailing evil, violence, falsehood, exclusion of the poor from the affairs of the "higher" administration, "cannot be avoided." Under Socialism much of the "primitive" democracy will inevitably be revived, since, for the first time in the history of civilized society, the *mass* of the population will rise to take an *independent* part, not only in voting and elections, *but also in the everyday administration of affairs*. Under Socialism *all* will take part in the work of government in turn and will soon become accustomed to no one governing.

Marx's critico-analytical genius perceived in the practical measures of the Commune the *turning point*, which the opportunists fear

and do not want to recognize because of their cowardice, because they are reluctant to break irrevocably with the bourgeoisie, and which the anarchists do not want to perceive, either through haste or through a general lack of understanding of the conditions of great social changes. "We must not even think of destroying the old state machine; how, then, can we hope to do without Ministries and officials?" argues the opportunist who is completely saturated with philistinism, and who, in fact, not only does not believe in revolution, in the creative power of revolution, but actually lives in mortal dread of it (like our Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries).

"We must think *only* of destroying the old state machine; it is no use studying the *concrete* lessons of earlier proletarian revolutions and analysing who to put in the place of *what* has been destroyed, and *how*" argues the anarchist (the best of the anarchists, of course, and not those who, with Messrs. Kropotkin and Co., follow in the wake of the bourgeoisie): consequently, the tactics of the anarchists become the tactics of *despair* instead of a ruthlessly bold revolutionary effort to solve concrete problems while taking into account the practical conditions of the mass movement.

Marx teaches us to avoid both kinds of error; he teaches us to display boundless audacity in destroying the old state machine entirely and at the same time he teaches us to put the question concretely: the Commune was able in the space of a few weeks to *start* building a *new*, proletarian state machine by introducing such-and-such measures to secure wider democracy and to uproot bureaucracy. Let us learn revolutionary audacity from the Communards; let us see in their practical measures the *outline* of practically-urgent and immediately-possible measures, and then, *pursuing this road*, we shall achieve the complete destruction of bureaucracy.

The possibility of this destruction is guaranteed by the fact that Socialism will shorten the working day, will raise the *masses*

to a new life, will create conditions for the *majority* of the population that will enable *everybody*, without exception, to perform "state functions," and this will lead to the *complete withering away* of the state in general.

"The object of the mass strike," Kautsky continues, "cannot be to *destroy* the state power; its only object can be to wring concessions from the government on some particular question, or to replace a hostile government by one that would be more yielding [*entgegenkommende*] to the proletariat. . . . But never, under any conditions, can it [the proletarian victory over a hostile government] lead to the *destruction* of the state power; it can lead only to a certain *shifting* [*Verschiebung*] of the relation of forces *within the state power*. . . . The aim of our political struggle remains, as hitherto, the conquest of state power by winning a majority in parliament and by converting parliament into the master of the government" (pp. 726, 727, 732).

This is nothing but the purest and most vulgar opportunism; a repudiation of revolution in deed, while accepting it in word. Kautsky's imagination goes no further than a "government . . . that would be more yielding to the proletariat"—a step backward to philistinism compared with 1847, when *The Communist Manifesto* proclaimed "the organization of the proletariat as the ruling class."

Kautsky will have to achieve his beloved "unity" with the Scheidemanns, Plekhanovs and Vanderveldes, all of whom agree to fight for a government "that would be more yielding to the proletariat."

But we shall make for a split with these traitors to Socialism, and we shall fight for the complete destruction of the old state machine, in order that the armed proletariat itself *shall become the government*. That is a big difference.

Kautsky may enjoy the pleasant company of the Legiens, Davids, Plekhanovs, Potresovs, Tseretelis and Chernovs, who are

quite willing to work for the "shifting of the relation of forces within the state power," for "winning a majority in parliament," and converting parliament into the "master of the government." A most worthy object, which is wholly acceptable to the opportunists and which keeps everything within the framework of the bourgeois parliamentary republic.

But we shall make for a split with the opportunists; and the whole class-conscious proletariat will be with us in the fight—not for the purpose of shifting the relation of forces, but for the purpose of *overthrowing the bourgeoisie, destroying* bourgeois parliamentarism, for a democratic republic after the type of the Commune, or a republic of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, for the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

* * *

To the right of Kautsky in international Socialism there are trends such as the *Socialist Monthly* in Germany (Legien, David, Kolb and many others, including the Scandinavians Stauning and Branting); the followers of Jaurès and Vandervelde in France and Belgium; Turati, Trèves and other representatives of the Right wing of the Italian Party; the Fabians and "Independents" (the Independent Labour Party, which, in fact, has always been dependent on the Liberals) in England; and the like. All these gentry who play a great, very often a predominant role in the parliamentary work and the press of the party, openly repudiate the dictatorship of the proletariat and pursue a policy of unconcealed opportunism. In the eyes of these gentry, the "dictatorship" of the proletariat "contradicts" democracy!! There is really no essential difference between them and the petty-bourgeois democrats.

Taking this circumstance into consideration, we are justified in drawing the conclusion that the Second International, in the case

of the overwhelming majority of its official representatives, has completely sunk into opportunism. The experience of the Commune has been not only forgotten, but distorted. Instead of inculcating in the workers' minds the idea that the time is nearing when they must rise up and smash the old state machine and substitute for it a new one, and in this way make their political rule the foundation for the Socialist reconstruction of society, they have actually taught the workers the very opposite and have depicted the "conquest of power" in a way that has left thousands of loop-holes for opportunism.

The distortion and hushing up of the question of the relation of the proletarian revolution to the state could not but play an immense role at a time when the states, with their military apparatus enlarged as a consequence of imperialist rivalry, had been transformed into military monsters which were exterminating millions of people in order to decide whether England or Germany—this or that finance capital—was to rule the world.*

* The MS. continues as follows:

CHAPTER VII

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONS OF 1905 AND 1917

The subject indicated in the title of this chapter is so vast that volumes could and should be written about it. In the present pamphlet it will be necessary to confine ourselves, naturally, to the most important lessons of experience, those touching directly upon the tasks of the proletariat in the revolution in relation to state power. (*Here the manuscript breaks off.—Ed.*)

POSTSCRIPT TO THE FIRST EDITION

THIS PAMPHLET was written in August and September 1917. I had already drawn up the plan for the next, the seventh chapter, "The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917." But except for the title I was unable to write a single line of the chapter; I was "interrupted" by the political crisis—the eve of the October Revolution of 1917. Such an "interruption" can only be welcomed; but the writing of the second part of the pamphlet ("The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917") will probably have to be put off for a long time. It is more pleasant and useful to go through the "experience of the revolution" than to write about it.

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